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CHRISTIAN COURIER

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"When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:17-19, NIV)

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Christmas greetings

Christmas greetings from everyone at Christian Courier

All of us at CC – Alan, Grace, Harry, Marsha, Natasha, Rose and Stan — join with our columnists in wishing all our readers a blessed Christmas. May it be a time of remembering God's favor and celebrating the light we have received in him, a light that illuminates the entire horizon of our world.

We've invited our columnists to send their personal greetings, and we put them here in alphabetical order.

December. Time to cut down a tree, buy gifts, put up the lights...I love it. Now, I've tended to be a bit cynical in the past about all the stuff we get wrapped up into at Christmas. In my sports columns this year, too, I've complained a fair amount about all the stuff that gets in the way of real sports — technology, greed, etc. The truth is, I love most of the traditional things at Christmas. And I don't feel bad. Sitting in the living room with a glass of egg nog, inhaling the fumes of the brightly lit pine tree in the corner is part of enjoying Christmas. I can't get enough of the lights and the music. Even the bustle of the shopping mall is kind of fun. When I look at myself closely, though, I realize what really makes Christmas enjoyable — community. It's an opportunity to steal a few days out of our stacked schedules to spend together.

What I continue to appreciate about the Christian Courier is that it too is a community. It's a meeting place for us to share ideas, argue, celebrate, and wrestle with what it means to be a Reformed Christian in a world that's changing by the second. In doing so, maybe it too allows us to take a bit of time out of our schedules to spend together.

I wish you all a great time of celebrating our Lord's birth. I thank you for the opportunity to bellyache about sports for a few paragraphs each month. It's been a pleasure to be a part of your community! **Tim Antonides**

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As you are bombarded with Santa Claus specials of the real meaning of Christmas and commercials that urge you to buy love and acceptance through products, may you find quiet moments to reflect on the birth of Jesus Christ, the greatest Christmas special ever aired and the greatest gift ever wrapped. **Ron DeBoer**

Christmas greetings — 4 weeks in advance of that date — come from the Climate Change Conference in the Hague, where, at this point, the powers of this world deny that God loved the world so much that he came to us as a newborn child. I am both angry and extremely sad that Christmas 2000 will see a world more prone to human-made disaster and pray more fervently than ever for CHrist coming again. My prayer is that this will happen in the year 2001. **Bert Hielema**

As members of the *Christian Courier* family we celebrate the birth of Jesus with the whole Christian church. We celebrate the most earth-shaking event in history — the full reality of the Creator of heaven and earth joining himself unbreakably to his world when, in his Son, he took created human nature upon himself and became one of us. Just imagine that! God joined himself to us! And in this Jesus he is uniting all things in heaven and earth. And we have already become one with this Jesus in his glorious resurrection, and one with each other. There is much that still separates us but in spite of that we are joined together and will be forever, in Christ.

As we celebrate the good news in this Christmas-tide 2000, let us all rejoice that our unity in Christ will someday overcome all the strife and sin still in our lives, and in our world. On that day we will stand in the new creation, one with Jesus and one with all those he has redeemed. May the year 2001 bring us all somewhat closer to that final oneness in Christ, with all who are in him. We who write hope and pray that what we will write will contribute to that glorious end. **Ty Hofman**

In the wake of two divisive elections, first in the U.S. and now in Canada, let's remind ourselves of two things.

First, all political power is ultimately subordinate to and derivative from God's absolute sovereignty over his cosmos. As the book of Daniel puts it, "[God] changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings" (Dan 2:21). This recurring refrain is intoned rhythmically throughout the book: "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation."

Second, those whom God has placed in positions of authority are responsible for acting justly, especially to the weak or vulnerable.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in humble circumstances, let us take comfort in the fact that those expending so much effort in their quest for political power do not have the last word but are ultimately answerable to the King of kings.

May we live with joy and thanksgiving in the light of God's Son throughout Advent, Christmas and always.

Voortman

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David T. Koyzis

I hope you all enjoy a wonderful holiday with friends and family. This will be the first time in four years that I celebrate Christmas in Canada, so I'm more excited than usual.

It's been so long for me that I find myself dreaming of the idealized Christmas setting — a family opening presents by a fireplace, a turkey roasting in the oven, snow falling, Bing Crosby singing in the background, kisses under mistletoe. But these are all elements of The Big Corporate Lie, and I should know better than to dream of them.

The year 2001 will bring about a slight alteration to "2 Under 35." Things are going to heat up. Rick is a great guy and a good buddy, but he and I agree on very little. After I digest my Christmas dinner, my second wind will kick in. And then Rick and I will go at it hard. Stay tuned! This should be fun for all CC readers.

Merry Christmas!! **Dirk Schouten**

I walked through the rain to my office this morning, remarking to myself how the darkness stretches longer and longer into the day in December. But the students are starting to get excited about the holidays, and I am reminded of stars, a very unsilent night, and the day God took on skin. Wishing you Christmas joy, rest from your labors, love in your family and lots of food in everybody's stomach. **Peter Schuurman**

May the Spirit of the season inspire you with love, joy & peace at Christmas & always. **Heidi Vanderslikke**

My writing in the *Christian Courier* is a direct result of my parents' deep commitment to the paper formerly known as the *Calvinist Contact*. While money was often in short supply during our early immigrant years, the subscription to this paper was never compromised. A visit to my parents' home when I was a young adult often included a quiet read since I did not have my own subscription. I remember cutting out columns written by Jim Kok.

My father died in 1987, but my mother at age 81, still faithfully reads the paper. The columns do not always apply to her age group yet she appreciates the writers that now fill its pages. Accepting change in the twilight of our lives is never easy. Yet, that is often asked of the seniors in our Christian community. Therefore, on the eve of this Christmas season and the up and coming new year, I would like to wish my mother Mrs. Gerda Heinen and all those who faithfully committed this paper to God's guidance for so many years a blessed Christmas and a healthy new year! May all of us who are involved in this paper be worthy of your committed support. **Arlene Van Hove**

Greetings from Pusan, South Korea. I want to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. **Rick Van Manen**

Christmas profoundly mixes joy with sorrow. We celebrate our Savior's birth, but recognise his purpose is achieved only by dying. But that is the King's way - to be born a baby and then die to redeem a world. May God bless you richly this holiday. And may he help us extend the hand of blessing to all creatures here below. **John R. Wood**

It is a pleasure to write for biblically literate and religiously committed readers, who do not shy away from some of the technical aspects of the study of Scripture. It is a pleasure and a privilege to write for you.

Thank you too for your occasional comments on my columns, both positive and negative. May the Christ of Christmas bless us all. **Al Wolters**

About our cover's artist:

George Langbroek is an artist living in St. Catharines, Ont. He had a solo exhibition at Calvin College in January, and numerous exhibitions throught Canada and the U.S. Recently, George has started his own gallery with three other artists in Jordan, Ont., called the Jordan Art Gallery.

Christmas meditation

The Song of Mary

Harry der Nederlanden

The doctrine of election is not a favorite nowadays even in those churches that descend from the Calvinist reformation. Yet, the inaugural event of the New Testament, the selection of a common Jewish girl to be the mother of the Messiah, Son of God and son of man, is the very epitome of election.

Just as the sovereign God singled out Abraham from the teeming peoples of the fertile crescent and chose an unremarkable Semitic tribe to coax, court, bully and love into his kingdom; just as he chose a fugitive called Moses to lead this tribe of slaves across the desert; just as he chose a shepherd boy with a sling to mold them into a nation, so now he chooses a young, unmarried girl living in a small town to give birth to what all the nations have been longing for since women began giving birth in pain and crying out in hope.

An adolescent girl awakens from sleep. She opens her eyes to see an angel of God standing over her telling her she will have a child who is to be Son of the Most High. According to Luke, she is filled with enough wonder to ask how such a thing is possible. But when the angel tells her that the power of the Most High will "overshadow her," she is content with the answer.

'I am the Lord's servant'

"I am the Lord's servant," she answers. "May it be as you say."

It's as if the master of a rich eighteenth century manor walks into the kitchen and says to one of the scullery maids, "From now on, you'll work upstairs for the Mistress."

"Yes, Sir," she replies. "Whatever you say."

This is the climactic event to which all of history has been building up. Shouldn't there be trumpets, fireworks, geysers, the sky peeled back and split wide open to the glories of heaven? But all Luke gives us is this little scene ordinary as a kitchen sink and a dishcloth: "May it be as you say."

Unprecedented levelling

We live in a democratic age that no longer believes in royalty and nobility, so we no longer feel the unprecedented levelling of this story. When the Gospel of Luke was written and for many hundreds of years afterward, almost all the stories told and retold among the nations were stories about nobles, kings, princes and princesses, heros, and divine or semi-divine beings. Most of the stories we read or see on TV or in the movies are about ordinary people like us. That is largely due to the influence of Christianity on our culture.

Before the coming of the Christ, the incursion of the divine into human life could not be borne by ordinary folk. The divine was dangerous and destructive to the human. It needed intermediaries – semi-divine, sacred beings like kings and priests. Special and careful preparations had to be made. Great temples and monuments erected. Intricate, elaborate ceremonies and rituals followed. The gods had to be appeased, propitiated, kept uncontaminated by the merely human.

Here, the angel says, You're going to have a baby. He'll be the Son of God, and you'll be his mom. And Mary says, "May it be as you say."

In the morning, she combs her hair, makes breakfast, sweeps up. As she hangs out the laundry, she looks out beyond the dusty little town to the hills of Galilee and gazes into the heart of a God who does not consume the ordinary but redeems it and makes it the vessel of redemption.

Why this girl?

That's not what we human beings — even those among us endowed with power and wisdom and honor – chose to do. That was God's choice, and all such choices of particular, finite, fallible, ordinary folk strike us as arbitrary. There's simply no good, justifiable, transcendentally valid reason for making such a choice. Why this girl, in this town, in this nation?

Only God knows.

Yet, when the Spirit of God descends upon human beings, they are not left in the dark. They are not rendered nameless and voiceless. They are not cancelled out by election. Quite the contrary.

Look at the remarkable psalm uttered by this simple, uneducated Jewish girl in Luke 1. It expresses the longing and anticipation of the entire Old Testament. Mary is aware of being part of a long lineage, a lineage, however, not of blood, not of royalty and privilege, but of the sovereign acts of the Mighty One on behalf of the lowly.

It is those who think they know by what principles (government approved standards?) God should dispense his mercy who stumble over its arbitrariness. By the logic of men, the good things of life come by and through the deployment of human power – the power of reason, of politics, of wealth, of technology, of words or what have you. All these do benefit us – but not equally. Some benefit more than others. Some are in control of this power; others are controlled by it. Some are even exploited, debased, enslaved by it.

Hierarchies emerge in which the few perch on top of the toiling, squirming heap, telling themselves that they have been especially favored among all peoples. They hear the voice of history, or of free enterprise or of liberal democracy saying: "Blessed are you: your God has recognized your virtues and will see to it that your fellow men will do the same." That's how religion and history and power have always functioned – to sanction hierarchy.

That a young, expectant girl should cast her eyes over this history is startling, isn't it? It's certainly not the first thing most of us think of in connection with the birth of Jesus. You might expect it from some highbrow steeped in liberation theology, but not from a Jewish girl who is carrying the Son of God.

Fall of the high and mighty

Mary's vision of the fall of the high and mighty and the raising up of the lowly is, to be sure, not a vision of an egalitarian society. It does, however, contradict those who are eager to declare that the Bible nowhere favors equality. Certainly, Mary's song brands as illusory the standards by which we humans normally (and normatively) measure success and greatness.

As we survey the history of Israel guided by Mary's song, we see the offspring of Abraham struggling to become a prosperous tribe and gradually a free, independent nation with a land of its own and with a powerful king to lead it. It's a development that is not only natural but encouraged by God himself. It's part and parcel of the covenant promises made to Abraham and repeated several times. Isaiah, too, has prophetic visions of the wealth of the surrounding nations being brought to Israel, in recognition of its dominance.

Mary's song dwells on the core of what we call the cultural mandate, to replenish and subdue the earth. That's the world her baby boy will be born into – a world of prophets, priests and kings, all on the make. The eyes of the serene madonna open onto the political.

This Christmas season follows hard on the heels of a federal election, but it recalls another kind of election – that of Mary to be the mother of Jesus and of her son to be our Lord and Savior. This election puts the political one in proper perspective. It exposes all our machinations to deploy power for our own benefit as an illusion.

The beginning and end of all power is here in this ordinary child, born to be king, but a king with a difference, a servant-king. This king did not see divinity as something to aspire to, for he shed it, as he shed his blood, while he stood in our place on the hill of human skulls built by those who would be kings.

In him, we too are elect, empowered with a power that divests itself of all privilege, humbling itself to seek the good of those who are not good. With Mary, we glorify the Lord and rejoice that he has remembered the humble. In his electing mercy he has performed and is performing mighty deeds that scatter and upset the chariots and thrones, the corporations and powers of the mighty, while lifting up the humble, blessing the poor, those in bondage, the blind, the oppressed, to proclaim the year of Jubilee.

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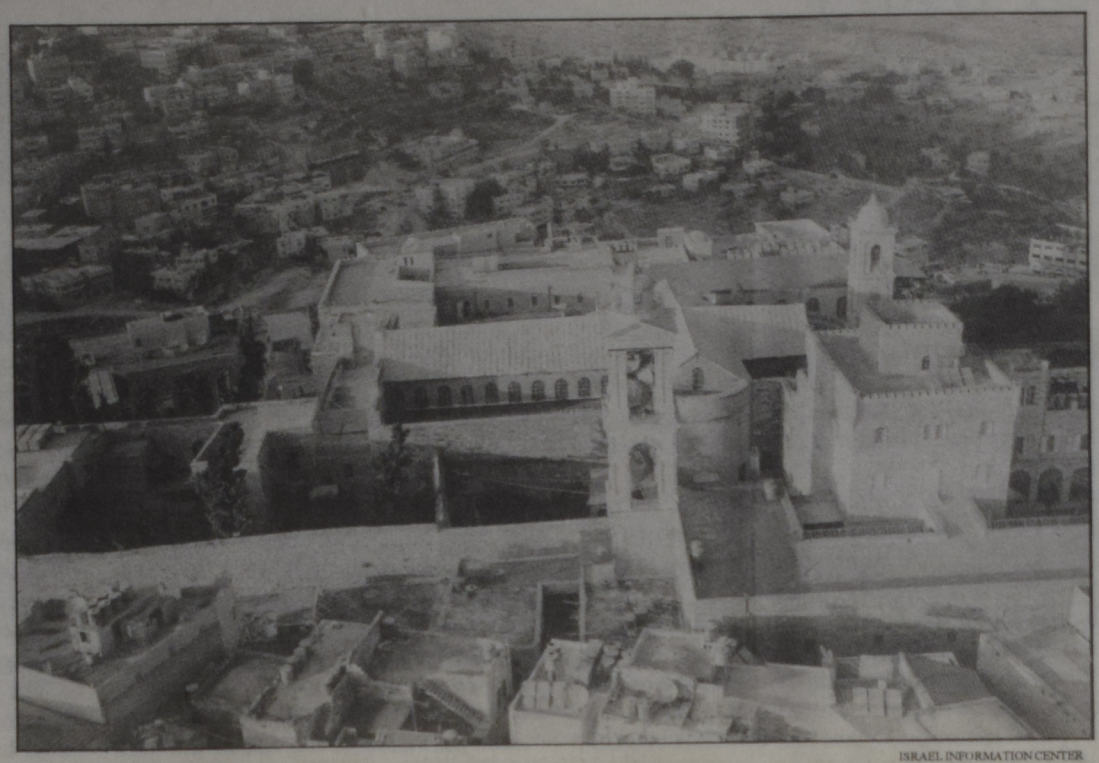
News

No peace in Bethlehem 2000 years after his birth

BETHLEHEM, Israel (EP) — Despite two years of planning for the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus in his birthplace, celebrations have been cancelled due to violence in the Middle East. The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem's Catholic diocese released a statement Nov. 14 announcing the cancellation of Christmas-related activities in Bethlehem which were to have been sponsored by the Catholic Church.

Since the fourth century, Bethlehem has traditionally opened its arms to hundreds of pilgrims who travel there every year for the city's Christmas celebration. But the Jerusalem Catholic Church announced that most of its special events planned for Christmas 2000 will not be held because of fighting between Palestinians and Israeli troops.



ISRAEL INFORMATION CENTER

An aerial view of Bethlehem.

Israel blamed for escalating violence

Cancelled events include a "Choirs of the World" presentation featuring choirs from the U.S., Ukraine and Russia; the Thirteen Holy Nights program; and a Christmas eve fireworks presentation and dove releasing ceremony. Also cancelled is Bethlehem's Christmas Festival, a highlight of the Christmas celebrations that was expected "to raise the cultural life of Bethlehem and restore the dignity the town had lost during 30 years of [Israeli] occupation," said the Jerusalem diocese.

Although most events have been cancelled, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Raed Awad Abussahlin, will make his traditional pilgrimage to the Nativity Church in Bethlehem to hold midnight mass.

The Jerusalem diocese blames Israel for the escalation of violence in Palestinian-held territories, and for the cancellation of Bethlehem's Christmas celebrations. "Efforts of the last two years are eclipsed by Israel's continued attacks on Palestinians, children and civilian men and women alike, as well as the local infrastructure and institutions," said a statement released by the Bethlehem 2000 Project and the Jerusalem diocese. "Bethlehem's legendary attributes have been overshadowed by the hard reality of its history. Presently, its day to day existence is witnessing the worst."

Tourist trade devastated

Violent attacks between Israelis and Palestinians have devastated Israeli's tourist trade, which expected record numbers of tourists during the 2000 Christmas season. News services report that currently Israel's tourist hotels are below 10 per cent capacity.

So far, more than 210 Palestinians have died and some 6,000 have been wounded in the fighting.

Leaders of the Bethlehem 2000 Project are hoping for the return of peace to Bethlehem by the Christmas holiday. Their statement said, "The people still hope that despite the prevailing grave conditions, there will still be some room for the people of Bethlehem, the land of peace and the birthplace of Jesus Christ, to celebrate Christmas in peace and away from gunfire. And they hope to be able to resume their tradition of hospitality to the world community."

Agency calls for stronger enforcement of federal ethics rules

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA — Although ethics counsellor Howard Wilson recently cleared Prime Minister Jean Chretien of charges of wrongdoing regarding helping a constituent get a bank loan, an Ottawa watchdog agency is calling Wilson a "lapdog," because he is directly responsible to the Prime Minister, and has not been critical of the federal Liberals since he was first appointed by Chretien in 1994.

Critics have accused ethics counsellor Howard Wilson (l.) of being a 'lapdog' of Prime Minister Jean Chretien, to whom he reports.

'An unethical lapdog'

"Howard Wilson is an unethical lapdog. As a result, there is no effective enforcement of ethics at the federal level," insists Duff Conacher, co-ordinator of Democracy Watch, an independent, Ottawa-based agency that advocates ethical behavior and accountability in government and business.

Democracy Watch wants the Liberals to keep a 1993 election promise and appoint an independent watchdog to ensure federal ethics rules are effectively enforced. Conacher suggests such a counsellor should have a limited term appointment and a legislated mandate, so that people could appeal the counsellor's decisions to the courts.

Regarding the recent situation involving Chretien, Conacher explains "In my mind, what Chretien did was corrupt. We have lax enforcement of ethics rules. It's a systemic problem.... The reason we're not filing a complaint is that Wilson is just the counsellor."

Conacher believes Chretien "definitely" should be investigated, but he thinks this will never happen. "The Prime Minister can overrule Wilson," he notes. "Chretien is very proud there have been no scandals" during his time in power, says Conacher. But one reason he cites for this is "Howard Wilson was a buffer."

One problem with Wilson's position is that he is responsible for ethics codes for lobbyists, as well as for senior government ministers. "There are no ethics rules for [regular] MPs or senators except for bribery codes, and Wilson does not enforce those," Conacher explains.

Rules not effectively enforced

According to Democracy Watch, none of the current ethics rules for public officials or lobbyists are effectively enforced for two main reasons: first, the enforcement office, the Ethics Counsellor, reports privately to the Prime Minister and has no investigative powers; and second, so-called "whistleblowers" have no legal way to have their complaints investigated by an independent body and are also not protected in any way from retaliation. The agency wants to see an ethics code set in place for all MPs and Senators, as promised by the Liberals in 1993.

Conacher has not been impressed by Wilson's interactions with Democracy Watch. Back in 1999, Democracy Watch complained to Wilson about several grants and loans connected with Chretien's Shawinigan, Quebec, riding. Eight months later, in February 2000, Wilson wrote back: "I've already commented on these positions." But in fact, his response referred to an earlier complaint on a different case from MP Lorne Nystrom, not Democracy Watch's complaint.

Wilson has not yet made a decision about the case Democracy Watch inquired about. When he does, says Conacher, "We expect he'll say, 'None of the lobbyists and ministers broke the code.' Then we'll take him to court."

Recipe for corruption

By doing so, Conacher explains, "We think we're going to essentially knock him out and force restructuring." He expects the court will rule that one person can't enforce two ethics codes: one for government ministers and one for lobbyists. "The court will say, 'Your rulings are thrown out.'" If a new person is appointed to look at

See **DEMOCRACY** *page 5...*

News

'There are no Christians left in Ternate'

Special to Compass Direct

MANADO, Indonesia (Compass) — "There are no Christians left in Ternate," said George Saselah, who had left his farm there to join his wife and newborn daughter in a refugee camp in Manado, on Indonesia's North Sulawesi island.

Other refugees interviewed in Manado — including some who had fled Ternate in November 1999 — confirmed Saselah's dramatic statement.

INDOCHAOS TEAM

MAYA VIDON/AFP

Scenes of violent chaos in Indonesia.

Muslims fighting over Christian property

"I have just returned from a visit to Halmahera," said Rev. Androcles Rumopah. "I went with one of the refugees from here. We can confirm that the churches have been burnt down and all the Christians have left. In fact, the Muslims are fighting over Christian property."

The religious violence that began on eastern Indonesia's Ambon island in 1999 soon spread to other islands in the Maluku chain (also known as the Moluccas). Ternate, the largest settlement and port of the northern Malukus, is itself an island. Its rich volcanic soil lends itself to the growing of cloves for which it is well known.

For years Muslims and Christians have lived harmoniously on Ternate, not only tolerating each other but also sharing in each other's festivities.

"At Christmas, we would happily invite our Muslim neighbors to share a meal with us to mark the occasion, and reciprocally, they would invite us to partake with them at the time of their festival Idul Fitri," one refugee said.

"Nobody believed that the anti-Christian violence taking place in the rest of Indonesia could come to the Malukus. We had our code of brotherhood, 'pela gandong-basudara,' which helped us to move forward together. Then suddenly, there came the attacks on Ambonese churches, and it wasn't long before violence flared up in the Kao region. It started over a border dispute with Muslims from Malifut, and the dispute spread to Ternate where it became fully-fledged religious cleansing.

"Some 60 people were killed over several weeks and many churches were burnt down. We are just 700 refugees in this camp, but many more have fled to Tobelo in the west of Halmahera or to some of the other islands. There must be thousands of refugees, and not only Christian."

The refugees say they prefer the rudimentary facilities of the refugee camp at Diklat, Manado, to their own land and homes on Halmahera because they feel safe. The government supplies rice and water, and there are attempts to get jobs for the refugees. Some have turned to fishing. But most would like to return if they could.

Refugees want to return

"We want to go back to Halmahera," said Ike Talangamin, "but is the Indonesian army going to protect us or will the harassment start again?"

"I want to go back," said George, who was once in the merchant navy but is now a plantation farmer. "When I can, I go back to Halmahera to see what is happening. But I don't want to risk my family yet."

The Forum for Justice in Northern Malukus (FPUKMU) recently issued statistics gathered from 31 locations in central Halmahera and the northern Malukus: killed so far in the conflict — 3,931; seriously wounded — 746; injured — 632; destroyed houses of worship — 206 (168 churches and 38 mosques); destroyed private houses — 14,217; destroyed schools — 115.

Since the trouble started in late 1999, Christians have been driven from the islands of Bacan, Obi, Morotai and Tidore, as well as Ternate. Only on Taliabu and Mangole are there still Muslims and Christians living side by side. Muslims have been forced from the northern part of Halmahera island.

187,000 refugees

At the end of July, the official number of refugees or displaced persons in North Maluku was 187,242. This figure included Muslims and Christians.

Muslims justify their aggression against Christians by saying they are opposing anti-Indonesian separatists known as the RMS (South luku Republic) dissidents. Muslim jihad leader Jafar Umar Thalib is quoted as saying that he has no intention of withdrawing his jihad warriors from the Malukus as long as the "Christian RMS rebels have not raised the white flag."

Corruption has hindered the supply of food and other aid, especially when aid is destined for the furthest islands. Indonesian Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri had declared a donation of a large quantity of rice when she visited the northern tip of the Malukus, Morotai Island, in April. Subsequently, bags of this gift of rice were discovered being retailed on the open market. Of four ambulances donated at the same time, two were reassigned for the victims of the earthquake near Bengkulu, while the other two were still in Jakarta in August awaiting delivery.

Meanwhile, attacks continue on the islands of Seram and Ambon, as further violence is threatening the central and northern Malukus.

"The Christians incessantly cry out for help. If the violence cannot be stopped, they want at least the chance to escape by ship. If the Jakarta government will not help us, what can the international community do?" asked one refugee.

Democracy Watch calls for changes to Ottawa's ethics enforcement system

... continued from page 5

ethical problems, Conacher says his group is "pretty confident" that such a person would rule the cases in question to be conflicts of interest.

Clearer rules needed

Conacher believes there should be clearer rules about how MPs can help out their constituents. In the case of Chretien's situation, he suggests, "When he got the call from a constituent, Chretien's office should have said, 'Do you know about the Business Development Bank of Canada? It's here to help'" — and should have done nothing else. MPs should help constituents find the government agency they need to deal with — but Conacher insists that "people can lobby on their own." If MPs have an attitude of "I'll help you if you help me," contends Conacher, "it's a clear recipe for corruption."

Another concern Democracy Watch has with Wilson is about his report concerning an until-now-secret investigation he conducted in 1997 into the approval process for grants made in Quebec under the federal Transitional Jobs Fund (TJF) program. According to Conacher, media reports make it clear that Wilson concluded in his 1997 report that Cabinet ministers consulted with Liberal MPs, Liberal party officials and party members concerning the approval of several TJF grants in Quebec; and that these consultations were a clear violation of the TJF grant approval process guidelines.

Federal ethics rules prohibit ministers from stepping out of their official roles "to assist private entities or persons in their dealings with the government where this would result in preferential treatment to any person."

Serious questions raised

Federal lobbying rules require anyone who is paid to communicate with government to influence the awarding of any grant to register as a lobbyist, and to avoid conflicts of interest, especially in situations with Ministers. The Liberals' TJF grant approval process raises serious questions about whether the ministers involved have broken the ethics rules, and the Liberal party officials and party members, and others involved have broken the lobbying rules, says Democracy Watch..

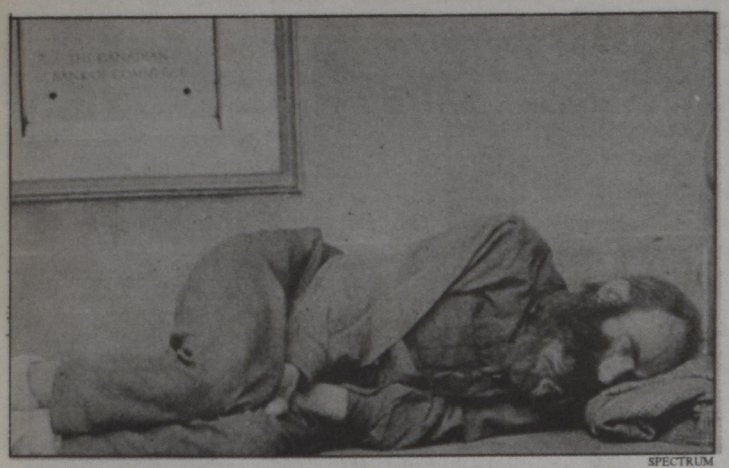
"By keeping the report secret for years, the Ethics Counsellor has revealed once again how much he is a lapdog of the Prime Minister," says Conacher. "This situation needs to be re-investigated to determine if ethics and lobbying rules have been broken."

In 1994, the Liberals introduced amendments to the Lobbyists Registration Act that Prime Minister Chretien said would "put an end to backroom deals," and bring lobbyists "from the shadows out into the open." Since then, lobbying has become "an incredible growth industry in Ottawa," according to Democracy Watch. At a conservatively estimated $250 million in annual revenues, the industry has more than doubled in size in the last five to six years, says the agency.

Besides Conacher, Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day has also called for changes to how the federal government deals with ethics issues. "The office of the ethics commission needs to be changed," Day told CBC recently. Under an Alliance government, an ethics commission would report to Parliament, not to the Prime Minister. "We need to restore ethics and integrity to government," Day asserted.

News

The changing face of homelessness



SPECTRUM

Robert VanderVennen

TORONTO, Ont. — Toronto has always had homeless people, but the increased problem of homelessness today is more political than social, said David Hulchanski recently in a public talk at the University of Toronto sponsored by Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society. Hulchanski is Director of the university's Centre for Urban and Community Studies.

A 1960 report studied homeless men in Toronto, when the homeless were entirely older males, many of whom were alcoholic. They didn't sleep outdoors but in cheap housing and flop houses which had several mattresses on the floor in one room, for which they'd pay maybe one dollar a night. "Home" was defined as a place to call your own, a place with surroundings where you knew you could fit.

A permanent emergency

A 1977 report said there now were fewer low-rent places, and a 1983 report said that people without homes created a permanent emergency. There were now some homeless women as well as men. By now there were people who couldn't find a shelter for sleep.

Homelessness today is much different from what it was in those years, said Hulchanski. Toronto's population boomed and housing has become much more expensive following a spiral in costs in the 1970s. It used to be that there was a 20 per cent gap in income between homeowners and renters, but by 1996 renters had an average family income of $30,000 a year while for homeowners the average was $65,000.

In 1993 the federal and Ontario governments stopped funding new publically-supported housing. Unemployment insurance was tightened and support services were cut back greatly. So today there is mass homelessness in Toronto.

Some people are homeless for long periods of time – the chronically homeless you might call them. Some for a shorter time, until they can get back on their feet. And some need housing for just one night. A few homeless people have mental health problems, but most homeless people just don't have enough money.

One step toward meeting the problem is the development of overnight "shelters." There are about 5,000 shelter beds in Toronto, and half of them are regularly occupied by families who are chronically homeless. Eighty per cent of the cost is paid by the Ontario government, whose shelter bill for a year in Toronto alone comes to $1 billion. Toronto has an estimated 10,000 homeless people. Canada has about 200,000 homeless.

There are many social problems which get attention and action, like child abuse and gangs. Not so with homelessness, says Hulchanski. He says that editorials in most of Toronto's major newspapers like the *Globe and Mail*, the *National Post* and the *Toronto Sun* describe Toronto's homeless as people who are mentally ill or who abuse alcohol or drugs. There has been a large increase in the number of homeless people, but that doesn't mean that we've had a big jump in the number of people who don't want to lead constructive lives. The cause of homelessness is a mixture of people with personal defects and a society that has a problem relating with them, said Hulchanski.

There are many jobs today which merely pay minimum wage without benefits. To alleviate the problem of homelessness, Hulchanski says that more assisted housing needs to be built, with financial support to enable the poor to pay the rent. But especially needed are social support services so that the poor are not altogether left to fend for themselves. We used to build safety nets for the weaker members of our society, but there are fewer safety nets today and many have become quite threadbare.

Future depends on government action

The future can be one in which homelessness is no longer a problem, or one in which it gets worse, or one in which there is such widespread homelessness that it becomes a routine part of city living. A sign of a routine situation is that universities are starting to offer courses in homelessness.

Will the number of homeless people continue to grow? That depends largely upon government action, says Hulchanski. Premier Mike Harris says he is letting the housing market do its thing by providing affordable rental housing. The problem is that since he took that stand in 1993 there has been no rental housing built in Toronto except for the very rich. A suggested reason for that is that municipal laws make it hard to evict a bad tenant, but a more substantial reason is that the rental vacancy rate in Toronto is under one per cent, too small a rate for the market to work effectively. Half of Toronto's residents live in rental housing.

A wrong approach to the problem says Hulchanski is to turn empty hospitals, like the Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, into shelters. Premier Harris has recently given that hospital to Toronto as a shelter but with no money for supportive services. A gift is not always a gift.

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Paraguay prisoners join in fasting and prayer to protest conditions

PARAGUAY (Religion Today) — Prayer and fasting ended a prison protest in Paraguay. The justice system in Paraguay "is not the worst in the world, but it's certainly not the best," SIM missionary Jonathan Beachy told the publication *SIM Now*. Some prisoners have been there for years without a trial, and until recently there was no parole, he said. Prison conditions are bad and medical care rare.

Male prisoners at a prison in Tacumbu went on a hunger strike to protest the conditions. The inmates asked Beachy, a Protestant chaplain who works at the prison, to join them so he could lead them in prayer and worship. "The prison director gratefully accepted my request to participate," Beachy said. "He told me, 'When things get hot, that is the time to pray and sing.' "

Prayer with all parties involved

Beachy preached to the 1,600 protesters, led them in several songs, and ended with prayer for all parties involved in the negotiations. That night men huddled together talking about God and praying. "With that many hungry prisoners crowded under a hot roof without ventilation, it was amazing to see how God kept things under control," Beachy said.

The next day the secretary of justice, attorney general, and representatives of the Supreme Court met with inmate leaders to hear their grievances. The prisoners prayed for a good outcome and rejoiced when the two sides announced an agreement later that afternoon, Beachy said. The prison director later revealed that he had been fasting along with inmates for a peaceful resolution.

QUICK TIP

Baby on board

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Bill Bomhof,
Chair of the Principal Search Committee
c/o Pacific Christian Secondary School
654 Agnes St, Victoria, B.C., V8Z 2E6
Phone: (250) 479-4532
Fax: (250) 479-3511
E-mail: pcshs@islandnet.com

Green Patriarch Bartholomew expounds theology of environment

The "Green Patriarch" (above and right).

NEW YORK CITY (Religion Today) — The "Green Patriarch" is pleading for planet earth. With his long white beard, black robes, miter, and staff, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew doesn't fit the stereotype of an environmental activist. But the spiritual leader of 200 million Orthodox Christians worldwide is known in Europe for his passionate speeches about pollution, which he has called a sin and a sacrilege, according to *The New York Times*. He spoke recently at the Metropolitan Club in New York, where he received an award from Scenic Hudson, an environmental group, for his concern for nature.

"Human beings and the environment compose a seamless garment of existence, a multicolored cloth, which we believe to be woven in its entirety by God," Bartholomew said. The connection between people and nature, like that between the body and the spirit, is at the centre of the Orthodox liturgy, he said.

Self-denial is important in preserving the environment, he said. "Restraint frees us from selfish demands, so that we may offer what remains and place it at the disposal of others."

Bartholomew warned of the dire consequences of environmental degradation. "According to Scripture, the wages of sin is death," he said. "At this point, this is confirmed from the everyday experience of the chain reactions of environmental destruction: changes in the climate, stripping the earth of its forests, torrential rainfalls, floods, mudslides; the consequence is death."

Vietnamese missionary to America

Dan Wooding

HAMPTON, Va. (Assist) — Dr. Paul Tran-Dinh-Ai, also known as Paul Ai, a leader of the Underground Church in Vietnam, has won many Vietnamese to Christ in his new hometown of Hampton, Virginia. The much-persecuted leader has now urged American Christians to "wake up and see the mission field in their own back yard" and has shared lessons he has learned under persecution.

After having been deported from his homeland after many arrests, Ai is now based at Bethel Temple in Hampton, Virginia. In Vietnam he was General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God and also the coordinator for the Interdenominational Christian Fellowship.

He explained his new ministry to the Vietnamese community in Hampton: "God has blessed us in reaching out to the Vietnamese community around our city," he said. "In the past six months since we started our ministry, until the end of October, we were able to win 30 Vietnamese into his kingdom.

"Our vision is for this congregation to grow to 100 members in this first year. The plan is to disciple the members every Thursday evening, and every other Saturday, so they will be equipped to reach out to others. Together we will continue to multiply the disciples and prepare them to reach out to the more than two million Vietnamese here in the U.S. before they will able to go back to Vietnam with the Good News of Jesus Christ to reach the whole nation of eighty million Vietnamese for Jesus."

Ai, who was once a Buddhist monk, revealed that when he left Vietnam, the leaders of 18 denominations came together to pray for him. He was deeply moved when they prayed, "Lord, we feel that Paul Ai is not moving to America as a refugee, but we send him to be a missionary to the United States of America."

The Vietnamese Christian leader then appealed to American Christians to become involved in reaching out to the more than two million Vietnamese refugees living in the U. S.

God trained him through persecution

Ai himself came to Christ some 30 years ago through the work of American missionaries. He pointed out that there are more than two million Vietnamese living in other countries, as well as many Vietnamese workers who are on temporary overseas work assignments. "They all need to hear the Gospel of Christ and I hope that Christians around the world will consider sharing the Good News with my people living in their countries," he said.

He also talked about what he has learned from years of persecution. "For me, my persecution in Vietnam was the way God used to train me and to put me along with him so he could teach me many lessons that he needed me to learn, which was how to help build the church in Vietnam, and also how to build the Assemblies of God of Vietnam as a structure," he said.

"God used that time to also teach me how to love his whole body, not only one denomination; he made me to pour myself out, so I was able to become the coordinator for 18 denominations in Vietnam for the Vietnam Interdenominational Christian Fellowship. For nearly three years, I brought many churches together, and every year we would hold three or four unity seminars. I would like the church outside to use the same model: to bring all the resources that God has given you together for the benefit the whole body of Christ.

"To me, persecution is in one way not good because the church has no freedom, but on the other side, you can see it made the church pure and the church there is really on fire for God. In Vietnam, I found that the more the church is persecuted, the fewer problems they have."

Five Shepherds and a Baby

Play and illustrations by Harry der Nederlanden

In the Middle Ages, before Bibles were widely available, one way to tell the story of salvation was to stage selected stories on wagons in the public square. Travelling companies of players would stage them in the towns or various guilds in the big cities. People loved to hear Mrs. Noah scold her husband for his folly in building a boat so far from water, to see the devil come leaping out of the mouth of hell with fireworks shooting from under his tail, or to hiss at Herod as he ranted against Jesus. One of their favorites was the so-called* Second Shepherd's Play, *which depicted ordinary, down-to-earth English shepherds who were none too bright suddenly visited with the glad tidings of God's celestial messengers. The play brought home the incredible, unfathomable, almost ludicrous nature of God himself coming to very, very ordinary folk as a baby. I followed the general outline of that play but brought out the humor a little more. I call it

Five Shepherds and a Baby

Scene: All around us as far as we can see are rolling hills. Well, they're not really rolling. They're too tired to roll. They aren't even good hills for rolling down like you did as a kid. The hillsides may look fairly soft and smooth from here, but the ground is hard, and rocks — hard, pointy rocks— poke up from the ground everywhere. And, of course, you'd probably hit several piles of sheep-dew before you rolled very far. No, this is not a park or playground. It is harsh, rugged country. The hills are not a clean, bright green, but a dusty, greenish brown.

Far in the distance you can see pale specks on the hills. You have to look hard. They look like dried weeds — tumbleweeds. If you keep looking hard, you'll see that they're moving, very slowly. Those are sheep. With every flock, there is a shepherd, who leads and protects them, day and night.

To be a shepherd is no walk in the park. You're tied down to your job twenty-four hours a day. You can't just take off for a while to meet your friends in the Camel Water Inn downtown in Bethlehem. The hills are steep and the grass is sparse, so you keep the flock moving. Your back is stiff, your leg muscles ache from climbing, and you keep cracking your toenails on those rocks that poke up out of the ground like murderous little gophers. You need new sandals, but you still owe the sandal-maker for this pair, so you've been avoiding him for months. You wish you had a sheep dog, but shepherds are cheaper than dogs. And they eat less. Yes, it's a hard, meager life. No radio, no T.V., not even a paperback to read as the sheep are grazing.

Besides his sandals and the rags that are his clothes, the shepherd has a staff and sometimes a sling. Sticks and stones. And with these he's expected to protect the sheep from hungry wolves, lions and thieves. All this for fifty bucks a month. No unemployment insurance, no health care, no raises ever. The only perk: you don't have your boss looking over your shoulder. That means you can get away with some things — if you're clever. You can pick up a little extra here and there, if you know what I mean. And many shepherds do. Your kids have got to eat, don't they? That's why shepherds have such a bad reputation, but they're really just regular fellows trying to eke out a living where life is hard.

Look, here's a typical shepherd's house...a shack, really. It reminds me of those tiny houses you see in northern Canada. The low roofline meeting the tall weeds. Firewood stacked to the gutter, if it had one. A rusty car without wheels in the back yard. A discarded washing machine, a fridge without a door. The roof, patched with shingles of different colors, needs patching again. Yes, it's a hard, strenuous life for a shepherd, a life with few rewards.

Let's peek in on this shepherd. His name is Mudd, Manly Mudd, and his wife's name is Vera. We're in luck: we've caught the shepherd at home. He doesn't seem to be eking today.

Act I

Vera *(A tall, boney woman, with large, tired eyes and an even larger, but energetic nose)*

- Manly! You've been lying on that couch staring at the ceiling for three days now. You said you were

Continued on page 8...

Life and death in October

Creation waits...

John Wood

She left us this October, the same as Dad had done last year. At forty-eight she was a grandmother, but still much too young to die. The taste of her loss is bitter on the palate of our lives. It is a melancholy thought, this month of death that comes each fall. Perhaps we should take October out of the calendar next year. We will just skip that month — it brings too much pain. But I don't recall always finding it that way. The fall was always a wonderful time and October was full of sights and scents that I embrace each year. Yet death is a real presence now. It has reached out and wrapped its palpable arms around us and drawn us into pain. I have wondered before, and now I wonder again more clearly, just what is death?

Life in the soil

To a biologist, dying is a necessary part of life. There is no life apart from dying. That is the way God in wisdom has structured the creation. Seeds die, leaves decay, worms eat and mate and finally decompose themselves into a rich, smelly and living mass of matter we call soil. Much more than weathered rocks, soil is filled with little creatures of all kinds and shapes. There are tiny mites of many colors. Some have hairy legs, where others are smooth, and a few have legs with great beads that look like pearls strung on a necklace.

The springtails hop about finding a feast of fungal strands, and on it goes with a myriad of creatures seldom seen by any but specialists. But none of this rich life happens without death. The soil comes from the great decomposition cycle of the earth. This is the Creator's marvellous plan for maintaining life on earth. From the soil springs the abundance of green plants that sustains us all.

A plan for death

The developmental biologists tell us that to grow a proper hand, cells must die. Otherwise you get a deformed and useless mass of tissue. The very shape of our bodies from embryo to adult is contoured by death. Some cells are specifically programmed for death. Tiny genetic timekeepers speed up or slow down the process in ways we only dimly perceive. When salmon run in their natal streams they listen to an ageless genetic program that bids them to their death. Unlike many fish that go on growing year after year, the life of salmon typically ends in four short years. This is so normal, so commonplace that it is easy to forget that this is programmed death.

Living in the city I have been cut off from autumn and its time of death. Where I grew up, fall was the time of hunt and harvest. We were always in a race with the fruit trees. You had to time it just right to get the apples and cherries at their peak of flavourful perfection. We had several varieties in our orchard and around the neighbourhood. So from late August through September there was a succession of fruit in season. Toward the end of this fruit-gathering came the bird and deer hunting seasons. When the leaves were down and damp, it was time to take a hike, shotgun or rifle in hand.

October might find us cutting up game birds or dressing-out a deer hanging in the shop. In some years we grew a steer and slaughtered it in the fall. I learned the smells of flesh and blood, and the feel and color of the organs of these creatures that sustain us. I learned to be thankful for these lives that made our life possible. Living close to the land helps cut through sentimentality to see how the world really works. In the midst of a specialised economy and urban setting it is now increasingly more difficult to teach these lessons. Today death is often remote, hidden away in special institutions.

Life is more than death

To a growing number of people this is about all there is to say about death. It is just part of life, so come to terms with it. But is that all? Wendell Berry challenges this assumption in his recent book, *Life Is A Miracle*. He writes that, "Science can teach us and help us to resist death, but it can't teach us to prepare for death or to die well." There is death that is necessary and good and death that is not.

The Creator came to overcome this second death. He came to redeem the creation. If all of death were merely part of the great cycle of life, then we would have little reason to complain. But it is not. We are creatures in need of redemption and the pain of our sin and separation runs deep. It is this redemption that the Christ child was born to accomplish. Jesus, born a baby, is redeeming the entire creation. This is a message of hope, and of joy to every creature.

John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College, Edmonton.

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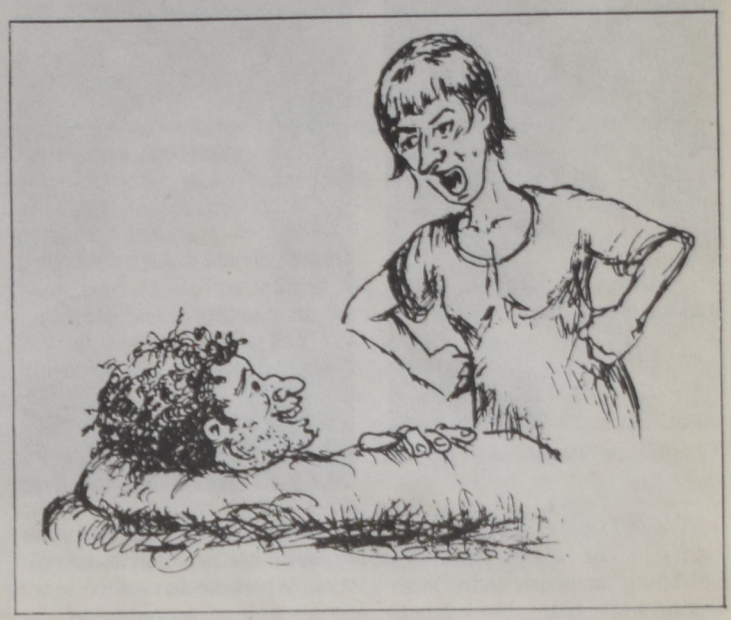
Five Shepherds and a Baby



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going to get us some real meat. I haven't had anything except rabbit, squirrel and gopher for a month. And you promised. You promised that when you quit herding sheep things would get better, and —

Manly

- I am working, honey. I'm thinking, planning. It takes a lot of planning to lead a band of freedom fighters.

Vera

- Freedom fighters! The only freedom you and your bunch are after is freedom from work. And since when did you become the leader? What happened to Beanpole? I thought he was the leader.

Manly [*Getting up off the couch to swagger a little.*]

- Beanpole took off to organize another group up north. The Romans came looking for him. He sold the halter from that camel we liberated last month, and somebody recognized it. So he chosen me to take his place. [*Plops back onto the couch.*]

Vera [*Holding her hands to her head.*]

- Ai-ai-ai! If you're the brains of that pitiful band you call the Sons of Gideon, we're in for some lean times. Come to think of it, I've never yet seen a nice plump, healthy-looking freedom fighter. [*She stands over him, her hands on her hips.*] Manly, please give up this nonsense and go back to what you know. At least when you were a shepherd, we had some decent meat once in a while. What I wouldn't give for a nice tender piece of lamb!

Manly

- All you think of is your stomach. What about getting respect like a man? Shepherds ain't even allowed in the Camel Water Inn, where everybody else goes to unwind. They said they couldn't stand our smell, so they kept breaking our staffs over our heads. We had to start our own place, the Ewe Dropp Inn. And it don't even have chairs. We sit on rocks.

Vera

- More likely they tossed you out because you freeloaders were always sneaking out without paying for your drinks. And people are sick of the outrageous lies youse shepherds make up when you're sitting around the fire at night.

Manly

- Lies? Lies? There's a whoppin' difference between a lie and a good story. Among shepherds, a good storyteller is almost as valuable as a good sheepdog. A good story makes a long, cold night short and warm.

Vera

- What about that story you told to go with the camel steaks you handed out? You said you jumped a detachment of Roman soldiers and stole the herd to divide among the people? Lies, all lies. May got the truth out of Ichabod. You found a camel that had got loose. You didn't even have to catch it because it collapsed. And it collapsed because it was sick, and everybody that ate the meat got sick.

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... continued from page 8

Manly

- Well, it wasn't that easy. We was sneaking up on them Romans at night and we meant to steal the camels. But God was on our side and led the camel right to us. What was the use of risking our lives? Even Gideon wouldn't have fought the Philistines if it wasn't necessary.

Vera

- It wasn't necessary; he fought the Midianites.

Manly

- And we fight the Romans by turning their mounts into camel-burgers.

May [*Entering and overhearing the tail-end of the conversation.*]

- And by harassing and robbing your own people travelling homeward for Ceasar's census. Freedom fighters fiddle-faddle. I got the truth out of Ichabod. Youse are nothing but a bunch of bandits.

Vera

- What? You lazy, good-for-nothing lout! Robbing your own people? And you can't even get me a decent piece of lamb? There, take that, you hoodlum! [*She whacks him with a broom.*] Ambushing innocent men and women and pretending you're heroes while you lie about the house thinking up new lies. Get out! And don't come back until you spend some of your ill-gotten gain on a nice leg of lamb. [*She whacks him again as he scurries out the door.*]

Manly [Sticking his head back around the edge of the door.]

- We wasn't robbing them, we was intercepting the taxes they was going to pay to the Romans.

May

- And what were you going to do with the money? Use it to fortify yourselves with courage from a bottle?

Manly

- How insulting! We was saving it to build a new clubhou— I mean, centre of operations. The old one blew down in that storm last month and—

Vera

- And that's why you've been spending so much time around the house lately. Git! [*She throws his hat at him.*] And remember, no lamb, no lunch; no lamb, no bed; no lamb, no roof over your head.

[*Manly slinks off, muttering to himself about injustice.*]

Act II

May

- Good for you, Vera. It's high time we women took charge and established some order around here. Since your Manly talked my Ichabod into quitting his sheep herding job and joining them Sons of Giddiness, he's become more and more uppity of late. He won't do what I tell him, stays up late every night and sleeps till noon every day.

Vera

- Manly talked Ichabod.... Poppycock! It was Ichabod got the two of them fired. It's just like you to blame my Manly for all the trouble those louts get into!

May

- Ichabod? He don't have the wits to get them into trouble. It's Manly that's always dreaming up hare-brained schemes to make a little on the side. And it's because you're always prodding him and never satisfied. Pigeon isn't good enough; Queen Vera has to have a leg of lamb, a flock of chickens, a roast pig with an apple in his mouth.

Vera

- Why, you ungrateful witch! Don't we always invite you over to eat with us when there's extra? And it's precisely because Ickie is witless that he got Manly fired. He told Laban that he could get a much better price for his lambs selling them to the caravans that stop at Abe's Oasis. It didn't take Laban long to figure out how he come by that little bit of information. You whack him on the head so much, all his wits have sunk into his fat rump.

May

- Oh yeah? Well, I know it isn't wits that keeps you plump as a pudding. If your weight depended on your wits, you'd be floating up there among the angels. No, I take that back. The angels would all flee down to earth to escape your nattering tongue, you— [*Vera cuts her off by pulling her apron over her head and pummeling her with a bunch of dead flowers that she pulls from a vase on the table.*]

Enter Solomanda, who pulls Vera off of May.

Solomanda

- Sisters, sisters, this is no way

Continued on page 10...

Boston Public: A bit of reality

Ron DeBoer

As a high school teacher for the past 14 years and as a David E. Kelly fan for the past few years, I was excited when I heard a new TV drama about high school was airing this fall. *Boston Public*, which stars Chi McBride as Principal Steven Harper and Anthony Heald as Vice Principal Scott Guber, is a show worth noting because of its realistic and hilarious cast of teachers and its presentation of timely themes, even if the plot-lines are slightly exaggerated.

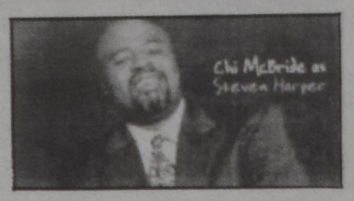
Traditional approach turned inside out

Boston Public is the new weekly drama about teachers in an urban high school. Typical of award-winning producer David E. Kelly's style, *Boston Public* takes the traditional approach to a school-based show and turns it inside out. The students in *Boston Public* are secondary to the action of the show. Most of the scenes take place in the staff room or in Principal Harper's office, and most of the conversations are between teachers. The students are seen from a distance, and we, the audience, walk the halls with the teachers.

Funny and real cast

The cast of teachers are funny and real. History teacher Harvey Lipschultz plays a passionate and cynical history teacher whose subtle verbal diatribes to students are bang-on and hilarious. Geology teacher Harry Senate is cocky and bold and while this attitude helps him in dealing with the administration, it often gets him in trouble in the classroom. Senate becomes intimate with a senior student while helping her with her homework and then is blackmailed for marks. English teacher Milton Buttle is a teacher who, despite his passions, is the butt of student jokes, including an unflattering view of himself on a student's internet website. And one of my favorite non-teachers is Principal Harper's secretary, Louisa, whose wise cracks and full knowledge of the goings-on in the school make her an important link between the viewers and the teachers.

But an area where *Boston Public* falls short is in its realism. As a teacher in a large urban public high school, I have yet to see a teacher fire a gun in class to get students' attention; I have never encountered a teacher who, despite her principal's pleas, insists on wearing provocative clothing, even when students make sexual comments as she walks down the hall; and I have never seen a



Anthony Heald and Chi McBride (Right, from top) star in Boston Public.

principal headlock a teacher while said teacher was verbally disciplining a student for inappropriate behavior.

And this is the downfall of most television programs about schools. In the TV world of school, all teens are portrayed as sex-crazed creatures whose love or hate toward teachers is so palpable it results in either death threats or sexual confrontations, it is a world in which most teachers are miserable and emotionally unstable, and it is a world of few victories and many conflicts, where school board higher- ups hate principals and where principals have it in for their teachers.

Boston Public is a mix between *Welcome Back Kotter*, *Room 222* and the *White Shadow* of TV days gone by. Part drama, part comedy, *Boston Public* has Kelly's trademark quirkiness and unique characters, which is what gives the show its strength. While you don't see teachers marking papers or helping students very often, you hear the irreverent banter of the staff room during lunch and you become aware of the not-so-wholesome thoughts of teachers in situations with students and other teachers.

When the teachers escape the student crowded hallways and take refuge in the staff room, you truly get the feeling the cameras are off and you are witnessing these characters in genuine conversations, much the way real teachers transform the moment they are separated from the students and fraternise with their colleagues. A potential strength of the show — if you can get past the character quirkiness and suspect plot-lines — concern the issues being tackled. Racist views in history textbooks, teen homosexuality, gender issues regarding clothing, and teenage drug use are but a few of the topics to be presented in future episodes. In classic David E. Kelly form, these issues won't be sugar-coated, and there will be no easy solutions to problems in our urban high schools.

While the content of *Boston Public* is decidedly American, this is a show worth checking out. You may not recognize your own high school experience, but the strong characters and urban themes will both entertain you and make you think.

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A Christmas romance

The cast of the Shaw Festival's recent production of She Loves Me.

Harry der Nederlanden

A couple of weeks ago in Niagara-on-the-Lake I saw the play *She Loves Me*. It is a love story in which a young man and woman develop a relationship by mail; in their letters they exchange their deepest thoughts, write about the books they are reading and the dreams they dream. They fall in love on the basis of words, without having seen one another or knowing one another's real names.

Coincidentally, without realizing it, they end up working side by side in the same shop, where there's a lot of pressure to perform and to compete. The shop is a picture of our capitalist, consumerist society in miniature, for it sells perfumes, creams and other luxury items. Its busiest days are, of course, during the Christmas season, and that's when this story is set, so it's really a Christmas play.

The shop setting is not conducive to real romance, at least not theirs. There is some hanky-panky going on between two other clerks, but the other one is wholly on the level of physical attraction. That between the hero and heroine is all friction and sparks on the surface, whereas on another level, the written word, there's a meeting of souls.

You may recognize the plot. Many years ago the play was made into a black-and-white movie called *The Shop around the Corner*. It is often shown around Christmas time, so keep an eye out for it in your TV Guide. The recent movie *You've Got Mail* uses a very similar idea.

'Secular Scripture'

But our literary tradition from its beginnings in poetry and drama to today's novels and films returns to this contrived plot again and again. Such stories have earned a category of their own – the Romance. Northrop Frye has celebrated the Romance as our "secular scripture." In Romance, and in this play, the yearnings and love of the characters are drawn not to what is near and familiar, but to an ideal, a dream of a better reality. Many like C.S. Lewis believe this longing is rooted in our dim recollection of a lost homeland or paradise.

Escapist or anti-escapist

Such memories or yearnings, however, are not an unmixed good.

A never-ending stream of love stories, from fairy tales to classics like *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Don Quixote* and *Emma*, depicts the folly of those whose desire and imagination are so fixated on an ideal mate, usually drawn from fiction, that they don't recognize the worth of the girl or boy next door. Romances are often referred to as "escape fiction" because they deal in dreams, fantasies and unrealistic plots that usually turn on coincidences. Many, however, are really anti-escapist. One after another shows us a lover, male or female, who has had her head so addled by romantic stories filled with ideal lovers that she is unable to give herself to a real flesh-and-blood person. Our dreams and ideals, they suggest, can be an impediment in relating to the actual world.

Yet, Romances do not end in loss and alienation, although often hearts do need to be broken. Usually there's a crisis, in which the central characters must search their hearts and confess that their own blindness and pride have led them to a point where they are about to lose that which is most dear to them. In Jane Austen's *Emma* this crisis derives much of its power from the fact that it comes close to what the Bible calls dying unto self and theologians call conversion. So Frye's description of Romance as "secular scripture" is apt.

In the play, *She Loves Me*, there's one character who undergoes such a shattering of self. The shop owner, an elderly man, is also a lover; his chief clerk has become like a son to him, but an ambiguous letter (all letters are ambiguous in Romances) makes him suspect that his clerk has betrayed him, so he fires him. Another instance of love misreading what is near and dear. Depressed and despondent, the shop owner tries to commit suicide, a perverse form of self-mortification.

Scales fall from their eyes

Although in a less violent way, the two young lovers, too, have to pass through a crisis that challenges their previous self-understanding. As in all Romances, however, in the end the scales fall from their eyes, the evil spell is broken, and the lovers at last discover that it is the flesh-and-blood person they've come to know who is the real source of their happiness, not some fanciful ideal.

In *She Loves Me* this discovery coincides with the coming of Christmas. Very fitting in many ways, because the union of the heart's longings with flesh-and-blood reality happens most profoundly in the incarnation: in him all the desires of all peoples throughout the ages are fulfilled; in him the Word became flesh and the Kingdom of Heaven is so near it is actually in and among us.

Admittedly, I'm reading this into the play and into the movie. But that's not irresponsible; that's what a Christian reader or viewer is called to do – to discern both the spirit and the Spirit.

Most Romances, it is true, including *She Loves Me*, are like shallow celebrations of Christmas. They disconnect the incarnation from the cross. They attribute too much power to the human capacity to incarnate love and thus remain a gossamer fantasy. Yet, at the same time, they are also driven by a recognition that love comes from beyond the realm of human manipulation, of buying and selling – that it is a gift, a gift that mortifies and then gives new life to those who will receive it.

Five Shepherds and a Baby

... continued from page 9

to build sisterhood and to help our people. We fight like dogs and our men act like sheep. Stop it, you two! If we're to keep our families from starving, we women need to put our heads together, not butt them together. I just saw Manly and Ickie slinking out of here like two wet hounds crawling out of a river. What's going on?

Vera

- Alright, alright, let go of me. Having that man moping around the house all day is driving me Jezebelly. I tell you, I need a thick, juicy lambchop to calm my nerves and steady my mind.

May

- Will you please stop yammering about lambchops. None of us have been eating much more than flatbread and cucumbers of late. Why should you be any different?

Solomanda

- Listen, I've been thinking. Laban fired Manly and Ickie without paying them their last two month's wages, right? The way I figure it, he owes them the equivalent of two plump sheep.

Vera

- What good is that? No court will take the word of two raggedy shepherds over that of rich Laban. Shepherds aren't even allowed to serve as witnesses. They say all shepherds are liars.

May

- That's right. And Manly has been arrested for sheep-stealing twice already. No way that judge is going to believe him. Besides, he wouldn't get within five furlongs of a courtroom.

Solomanda

- No, we won't have to go to court to get our lamb. I have a plan. Our men are only pretending to be freedom fighters. But we'll make them the real thing. We'll liberate some lambchops for ourselves. May, you go fetch Manly and Ickie back here. We'll get them started in a new career.

Act III

Manly and Ichabod carefully peek around the corner of the door. Ickie has his finger in his mouth.

Manly

- Is it alright to come in? May said.... [*May roughly shoves him through the door and drags Ickie in after her, pulling him by the sleeve.*]

Vera

- Sit! No, not there. That's May's chair. Sit on the floor. Now shut up and listen. Solly has an idea for getting us some lambchops to celebrate Liberation.

Solomanda

- That's right. And since we are a conquered people, occupied by the Romans, we won't have a reason to celebrate unless you two do something heroic. We're counting on you two to be our Moses and our Joshua. You will lead us out of the land of hunger and despair into a land of plenty.

Ickie

- You mean we're going to emigrate? Let's all move to the Promised Land. Karl says things are much better th.... [*May cuffs him on the head.*]

May

- Hush, Solly is talking.

Solomanda

- No, Ickie, we're not moving. This is the Promised Land. Things are going to get better right here. You two are going to live up to your name as liberators and

Continued on page 11...

... *continued from page 10*

liberate some lambchops for us. Here's the plan.

Ickie

- You can't do that. Beanpole chose Manly as our leader. The Sons of Gideon don't allow women.... [*Ickie ducks as May takes another swipe at him, missing.*]

May

- Who says?

Manly

- It's obvious. We're called the *sons* of Gideon. Women can't be sons.[*A moment of silence. Everyone puts hand to chin to think.*]

Solomanda

- Listen. Before Gideon, there was Deborah. She was a leader just like Gideon. Vera, May and I will be the Daughters of Deborah. Together we will be the Daughters of Deborah and the Sons of Gideon. [*They all sit and smile at one another. No, I mean,* big *smiles.*]

Solomanda

- Of course, we can't be heroes like you men. But we can do the background work, like organizing and planning things. That gives you men more time to work at being heroes.

Manly

- Great! Okay, what do we do?

Ickie

- Do we get weapons?

Solomanda

- No, your staves will be enough.

Ickie

- Staves? We don't have any of those either. All each of us has is a staff with a crook on it. I want a big sword.

May

- Humph! I can't even trust him with a knife at home. He's always cutting his fingers. And now he wants a sword.

Vera

- Oh, May, stop picking on him. He's going to play the most important role tonight. [*She winks at May.*]

Manly

- How come he gets the most important role? I'm the leader; I should get to choose.

Vera

- Because we need your stealth and speed elsewhere, dear. The success of this mission hangs on your heels.

Solomanda

- Enough interruptions already! Quiet, everybody. No more questions til I'm finished. Okay, now here's the plan. This afternoon, I'll stroll up to the pasture where Jumpy, Fleatree and Sheepnose are working, and I'll prime them with scary stories of spirits and ghosts that have been appearing to people on the road and in the hills. And—

Ickie

- Ghosts! I ain't going up there if there's ghosts — not unless I get me a sword for protection. [*Sol and Vera both swing at Ickie, but he ducks in time and sticks out his tongue, and promptly gets whacked by May.*]

Solomanda

- There are no ghosts — except you, if you interrupt once more.

Now listen: tonight, after dark, when the sheep are settled and the boys are gathered round the fire, Ickie, will suddenly appear out of the dark like a ghost, make some ghostly sounds, and scare those three shepherds into last week. While Ickie has their attention, Manly will sneak up behind them and snatch a sheep.

Ickie

- But they'll recognize me. They all know me, and they won't believe I'm a ghost. I don't look scary.

Vera

- Hmmm. We'll have to disguise him. I have an idea: we'll smear him with sheep fat and roll him in flour. That will make him look like a ghost.

Manly

- What about me? What if the sheep bleats? They'll look back and see me snatching a sheep. I want a disguise too.

May

- We'll disguise him as a wolf. Wolves are always snatching sheep in the hills. And Jumpy and Fleatree are scared to death of wolves. What's the matter, Manly? Are you scared?

Manly

- No, but it seems so sneaky. Gideon was a hero, not a sneak.

Vera

- What do you mean? How do you think he got into the middle of that Midianite camp? He and his men *disguised* themselves. They

Continued on page 12...

Detail from Adoration of the Magi, *by Rembrandt van Rijn (ca.1632).*

Christmas Re-Visited

In Bethlehem,
beneath a Constantine
church, we enter the
cave-like stable,
scarlet-draped,
where it is said
the Christ was born.

The manger's been long
removed to Rome;
the scrubbed
smooth stone
shows no signs
now of a Saviour.

Some, bending low, light
a dollar's worth of
candles, crawl on hands
and knees to kiss the
sacred spot.

I long to kneel on hay,
and dung and afterbirth,
between a travel-
weary donkey
and a few straggly
sheep. To reach into
the rock bed, touch
the God-made-flesh,
and cradle Christ —
Immanuel.

Joan Dower Kosmachuk
Brampton, Ont.

Franklin Graham appointed CEO of Graham Association

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (EP) — Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham, has been named chief executive officer of the ministry that bears his father's name.

Evangelist Billy Graham, who turned 82 in November, chaired the annual meeting of the board of directors of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) in November, where he reiterated that he has no plans to retire.

MISSIONNIAGARA

Franklin Graham

Unanimous decision

The ministry's board of directors unanimously appointed Franklin Graham, 48, CEO of the organization which his father founded in 1950. That position has been held by Billy Graham, who retains the position of chairman of the board. Franklin will also continue to serve as first vice-chairman, a position he has held since it was created in 1995. John Corts will serve as president of BGEA, a position he has held since 1992, and will continue to lead the operation of BGEA headquarters in Minnesota.

Billy Graham, who had just completed a four-day crusade in Jacksonville, Fla., drawing 242,000 people, told his board he would like to accept two or three crusade invitations next year. "I'm not retiring," the evangelist said, "but I now want to turn over the administrative and management burden of running the organization to my son, who has proven to be a great leader both in running the Samaritan's Purse ministry and in working closely with our organization."

Franklin, who has served on his father's board for some 20 years, will continue his role as chairman and CEO of Samaritan's Purse, an international Christian relief organization headquartered in Boone, N.C. Additionally, Franklin will continue to conduct about six crusades or "festivals" each year.

Franklin Graham said, "My commitment is to see that this organization stands firmly behind my father to ensure that we accomplish all that God has put on his heart. I pledge to keep our focus squarely on the ministry and work of evangelism, using every available means to tell people everywhere the good news that God loves them and that Christ died for them. This is the same message my father has faithfully proclaimed for 50 years and we're not about to change it now or ever."

CHRISTMAS 2000

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Chinese government seeks to enforce doctrinal uniformity

BEIJING, China (EP) — China's government-sanctioned Protestant church is reportedly cracking down on seminary students and teachers who do not subscribe to official doctrines. According to Religion Today, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) is actively seeking out seminarians with connections to China's underground house church movement and those who encourage evangelism.

World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) reports that the doctrinal witch hunt led by the TSPM has led to the dismissal of several seminary professors, expulsion of students and the dismissal of one well-known pastor in Shanghai. The TSPM is also threatening to close seminaries in Henan province because of the close ties between seminary staff and house churches.

Evangelicals affected by this crackdown also report that the TSPM is reasserting its own brand of theology within China's seminaries — a mixture of Marxism, New Age ideas and biblical teachings. Sources told WEF that this theology diminishes the significance of the Bible and the supremacy of God.

Christian leaders consider this aggressive attack by the TSPM as another attempt by the Chinese government to control the exploding house church movement in China, which has an estimated membership of tens of millions of Chinese. Such churches are illegal in China because they do not follow the form of Christianity prescribed by the communist government.

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CHRISTMAS SPECIALS

Five Shepherds and a Baby

... continued from page 11

disguised themselves as jugs. At least you two don't have to dress up like jugs. [*Manly and Ickie think about this for a minute and seem to conclude that anything would be better than to go disguised as jugs. They look at each other and smile and nod. Manly and Ickie exit, throwing an arm over one another's shoulders. Vera and May likewise. Solomanda lingers onstage a moment.*]

Solomanda
- Daughters of Deborah.... I like the sound. Well, if nothing else, at least it will keep us from beating on each other for a while. If we can't hoodwink those three numbskulls watching the sheep, we deserve to be nobodies with nowhere to sleep.

Act IV

Three shepherds are sitting around a small fire. One of them (Jumpy) keeps glancing over his shoulder. An other (Fleatree) keeps scratching himself and ducking his head into his robe to see what's eating him. The third (Sheepnose) keeps nodding off to sleep, almost falling forward into the fire.

Fleatree
- What's eating you?

Jumpy
- I dunno. I'm just Jumpy, I guess. There... did you hear that?

Fleatree
- What, what? Was it a moaning sound? Like demons riding the east wind?

Jumpy
- No, a low, rumbling sound, like devils tunnelling through the earth.

Fleatree
- That? You mean that? [*They both hold their breath and listen.*] Lamebrain! That's Sheepnose snoring. [*He prods Sheepnose with his staff.*] Wake up, Schnozz, you're stirring up the spirits underground with your rumbling. You're liable to start earthquakes.

[*Sheepnose thrashes about wildly and starts to rise. Just then, Ickie leaps up, whitened with flour. Sheepnose tumbles backward. Fleatree falls forward onto his knees and covers his face with his hands. Jumpy grabs his staff in both hands and holds it before him, shaking violently.*]

Ickie
- I am a fierce, frightening spirit. I've come to haunt you and make you tremble. Run for your lives. See how pale I am. I may look like Ickie, but I'm not. I'm a fallen angel. Who-o-o-o! Cover your faces or you'll go blind. Run, Jumpy, run, or I'll pelt you with sheep dung. [*Ickie starts picking up sheep dung to throw at the shepherds. Fleatree peeks between his fingers.*]

Fleatree
- It sounds just like Ickie.

Sheepnose [*Lifting his head to look.*]
- It looks a lot like Ickie.

Jumpy [*Ducking to avoid the sheep missiles.*]
- It throws just like Ickie.

All Three Shepherds in unison - It *is* Ickie.

[*Jumpy and Fleatree raise their staffs like cudgels and begin chasing Ickie, who retreats, shouting:*]

Ickie
- No, I'm a ghost. You can't beat a ghost.

Continued on page 13...

... continued from page 12

[Sheepnose looks around for the staff he's dropped. When he looks behind him, he sees Manly in the act of snatching a lamb.]

Sheepnose
- Stop, thief. Help! Someone's stealing our sheep.

Manly [*Pointing to his mask.*]
- I'm a wolf, stupid.

Sheepnose
- Help, there's a wolf stealing our sheep.

Fleatree and Jumpy come running back.

Jumpy
- Yup, that's a wolf alright, and he's carrying one of our sheep. Look at him go.

Fleatree
- He runs just like Manly.

The three shepherds look at each other. They look back in the direction Ickie took and then in Manly's direction.

Sheepnose
- Where there's an Ickie there's always a Manly.

Fleatree
- And they're always up to no good.

Jumpy
- C'mon, why are we standing here looking stupid. Let's go after them and see where they're going.

Fleatree
- I've got a better idea. Let's just head for Manly's house. We'll squash that wolf like a pesky louse.

Act V

Manly's house. Vera, May and Solomanda are sitting at a table playing dominoes. There's also a bed in the room.

Manly bursts through the door carrying a lamb. Ickie is right behind him, holding his coat-tail and looking back.

Manly
- Quick, hide the sheep. They're right behind us.

Ickie
- I told you I wouldn't make a good ghost. Them shepherds are so rough, they don't even respect the dead. Oooh, I can already feel their staffs on my back.

Solomanda
- Quick, May, take Ickie to the pump and wash him off. Use the back door. Vera, jump into bed. Manly, wrap that lamb in this blanket so only his nose is showing. Hurry, I hear them coming.

Ickie and May exit, May pushing Ickie, who is slow to react. Vera jumps into bed. Manly wraps the lamb in the blanket and hands it to Solly. Solly tucks it in bed beside Vera. Just then the three shepherds come tumbling into the room, Jumpy pushing Fleatree, who falls, Jumpy falling over him and Sheepnose tumbling onto both of them.

Solomanda
- Welcome, welcome, neighbors. Manly, bid your friends welcome. They must have heard the good news.

Manly [*Puzzled.*]
- The good news?

Solomanda
- Yes, the birth of your first-born son. Ask your friends to sit and have some camel tea.

Manly [*Suddenly perking up and smiling.*]
- I have a son? Yes, I have a son! Welcome Fleatree, Jumpy, Sheepnose. Congratulate me! I'm a father. Sit down, sit down and have some camel tea. I'm sorry I don't have any cigars to offer you, but the baby came so unexpectedly.

Fleatree gets up and looks around suspiciously. Jumpy sidles over to the bed to look at the baby. Sheepnose smiles and edges toward the table to sit.

Fleatree
- We didn't come here to congratulate you. We came here looking for our sheep.

Jumpy
- I didn't know your wife was expecting, Manly. I thought she was just getting fat.

Vera
- Watch your tongue, you smelly shepherd, or I'll give you a rap on the nose.

Sheepnose
- Yeah, Manly, why didn't you tell us? We would have brought you a little present.

Fleatree
- Cut the small talk. We're here to search for our sheep. We saw Manly snatch it. Search the house, you two.

Solomanda
- But Manly was busy all night

Continued on page 14...

Redemption rips through the surface of time

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

Three limited edition prints by Thomas Kinkade

The limited edition prints of artist Thomas Kinkade sell quickly at the local art shop especially during the Christmas season. His subjects include scenes depicting warm and inviting cottages with glorious cascading flowers on walls. fences and gates to nostalgic small town scenes as well as colorful, peaceful gardens of prayer. He uses fine detail and riotous color to transform a lifeless canvas into a scene of boundless beauty.

Kinkade acknowledges he possesses a strong attraction for glorious gardens "resplendent in their colors and tranquil in their shadowy private spaces." He further believes "it may be that all of us carry in our souls a memory of Eden, the glorious garden where we came to know our Creator." If this is so, it may explain why his work sells so well. Beauty, peace and harmony — a soothing antidote for harried twenty-first century senses.

Tugs toward Eden?

We can appreciate Kinkade's surreal art because it reflects our longing for all that is beautiful and good in the world. We can have equal appreciation for skiing virgin slopes, hiking untravelled trails or sailing deserted coves.

Similarly, Christmas celebrations are also sometimes planned to satisfy this need for beauty, peace and harmony. Whether we agree or disagree with its commercialization, the story of Jesus' birth remains one of joy and thanksgiving and we want to participate in the caring and sharing of this season. And so we worship a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger by reading the well-known scripture passages and singing Silent Night, Holy Night and Joy to the World.

In the midst of these celebrations, however, we often become keenly aware of the reality of the brokenness of life. We miss our loved ones who are no longer with us. We feel the pain of estranged relationships due to abuse or other sorrows. And the festive days, no matter how well planned, do not always work out as well as we would like nor do the relationships we nurture during the year bear the fruit we hoped for.

Ripples of redemption

For us to truly enjoy our Christmas celebrations we need to understand our ambivalence about our "tugs towards Eden" and the reality of the limitations of our human existence. And while surreal art can be immensely soothing for our hurting and harried senses, it does not always offer new depth to our faith experiences.

And so, we can turn to other artists to add a contemporary flavor to the traditional Christian story. The choices, of course, are many. However, the one I often appreciate is a simple song sung by Canadian singer Bruce Cockburn in which the refrain emphasizes that Jesus' birth is

"like a stone on the surface of a still river;
driving the ripples on forever; (as)
redemption rips through the surface of time
in the cry of the tiny babe."

In other words, it is when we can appreciate the beauty and miracle of Christ's birth, while at the same time acknowledging our need for redemption, that we can have a joyous and harmonious Christmas celebration.

Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Humor/Drama

'Twas a Real Family Christmas

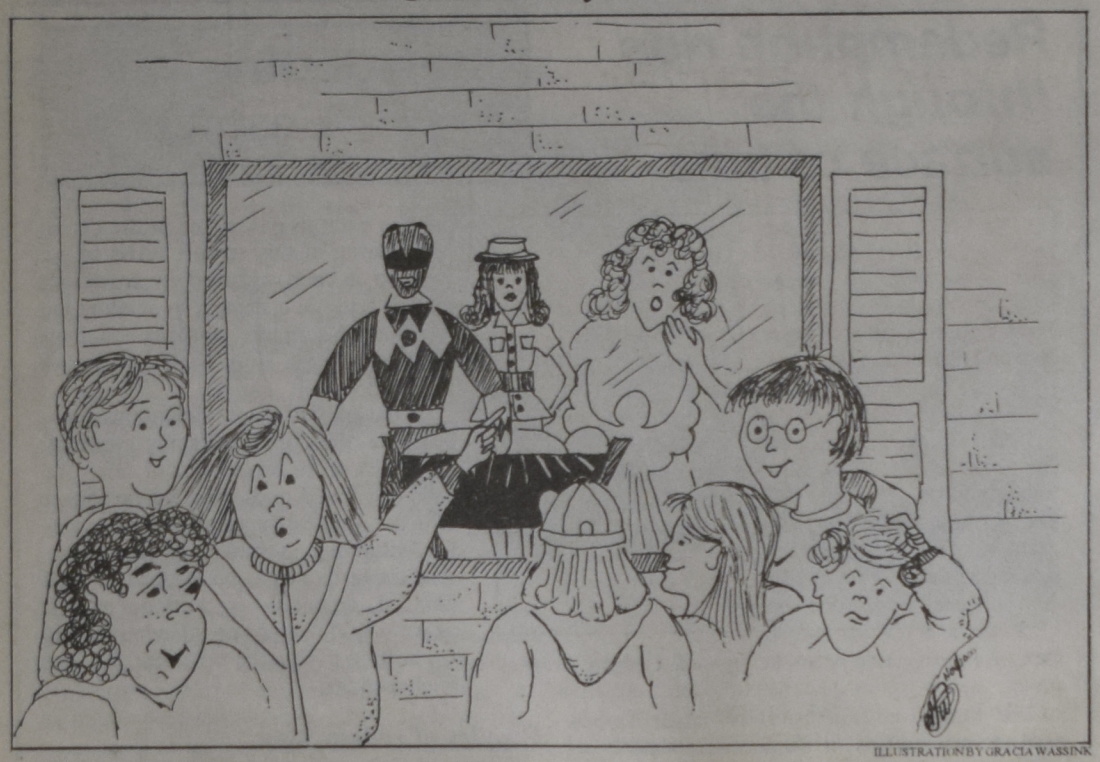

ILLUSTRATION BY GRACIA WASSINK

Karen de Boer

When I was a child I thought Advent began with the arrival of the Sears Christmas Wish Book — an event I now try to intercept each fall by keeping watch over the mailbox by day and gluing it shut at night. Apparently this year I let my guard down. Yesterday, I found the coveted catalogue under our nine-year-old's pillow. Pages 365 – 389 were dog-eared, with the latest toys circled and ranked in order of importance. A printed list titled "Stuff I Want" was taped to the back. I figure she bribed the mail carrier.

It's always a challenge at our house to keep the kids focused on the birth and not the bounty at Christmas. We've even gone for outside help. At our local Christian bookstore we found a table piled high with books that promised *101 Simple Steps to a Christ Centred Christmas, Advent Made Easy* and *Ten Tips for Terrific Tree Trimmings*. I asked if they'd throw in the table if I bought the whole display. Most of the ideas were great; it's the accompanying photographs I have a problem with. Who are these smiling adults and cherub-faced children wearing clean clothes and sitting in mess-free living rooms?

It was a picture of one of those fake families that persuaded me to buy a Jesse Tree Advent calendar. While paying, I let visions of warm family moments beside the fireplace dance in my head. I saw myself expressively reading Bible passages to my attentive family, after which one of the children would gently lift the appropriate symbol from a numbered pocket and hang it on the Jesse Tree, while the others looked on. Maybe my expectations were too high. We don't even own a fireplace. Our kids didn't find the prophecies of Isaiah particularly riveting, and our two-year-old ate the Adam's apple symbol. We needed to make a list of whose turn it was to take the symbol out of the pocket each day. A strategy developed after an argument ended in Jacob's ladder being smashed over someone's head.

Searching for a more hands-on approach, we decided to buy a child-friendly manger scene. We would recreate Bethlehem in our living room! I carefully arranged the scene in the front window. Now we could minister to the neighbors and passers-by at the same time! Everyone admired the fluffy cotton ball clouds placed around the angels and the authentic bits of simulated hay strewn about the animal stalls. We were thrilled to see a small crowd form outside to stare with awe and wonder. Then I realised Joseph had been replaced with a Power Ranger, and Mary was dressed as Safari Barbie.

We wanted to make decorating the tree a special event. After hours of wandering around Home Depot searching for the perfect cone-shaped Scotch Pine, we returned home with the Charlie Brown special. We learned that arranging the tree in its stand is a task best completed with no children in the room. Once the tree was propped against the wall, we woke up the kids and hauled them into the family room to begin decorating. Midway through my speech on "the symbolism and meaning of Christmas tree ornaments," a fight broke out over whose turn it was to put the angel at the top. We hung a nail on the tree to remind us why Jesus was born. Suddenly Christmas had new meaning for our five-year-old. She burst into tears and refused to go near the tree for the rest of the holidays.

We decided that in lieu of buying expensive and extravagant gifts for each other we would shop at the Salvation Army Thrift Store. Each child received the name of another family member and was given a $5.00 spending limit. I am now the proud owner of an eight-track tape holder and an embroidered pillow case that reads "Happy Anniversary Bob and Joanne".

And so as another Christmas approaches, I remind myself that I'm not the only mother whose expectations don't always match the results. Mary probably had a different picture of what her celebration of Jesus' birth would be like too. I doubt that a dirty stable with an uncomfortable hay mattress matched Mary's vision for the birth of her firstborn, the Messiah. My family's attempts to keep Christ at the centre of our Christmas celebrations may be less than perfect, but the important thing is that we try.

We can be thankful that the one whose birth we celebrate is perfect. And the important thing is that He came.

Five Shepherds and a Baby

... continued from page 13

rocking his baby to sleep. How could you accuse him, a newborn father, of such a wicked thing!

Jumpy [*On his hands and knees, looking under the bed.*]
- Yeah, Fleatree, maybe it really was a wolf we saw.

Sheepnose [*Looking under the table.*]
- No father would be out stealing sheep when his first child is being born.

Fleatree [*Moving closer to the bed to peer at the baby.*]
- That's one big baby for a newborn. Whew, what an ugly kid. Hey, Manly, are you sure he's yours? He looks more like Sheepnose than you.

Vera
- Alright, that does it. Get that smelly threesome out of here or I'll thrash them all.

The lamb starts struggling and bleating.

Solomanda
- Oh, look you've wakened the baby and he's frightened.

Jumpy
- He doesn't look too good. I'd call in the doctor to look him over.

Sheepnose
- Yes, he doesn't sound good, either. He sounds hoarse. In fact, he sounds just like....

All Three Shepherds in unison - ...a sheep!

The sheep pops out of the blanket and flies across the room.

Jumpy
- Catch it, it's getting away.

Vera jumps out of bed and tries to make a run for it.

Sheepnose
- Catch her, she's getting away.

Manly tries to tiptoe out the door.

Fleatree
- Catch him, he's getting away.

Solomanda
- That was a sheep? I thought there was something wrong with that baby when it was born. But I'm no midwife, you know, you can't blame me. My eyes aren't what they used to be.

Jumpy
- What do we do with them?

Fleatree
- We'll take them all to Laban, and he'll take them to the sheriff to have them stripped and whipped.

May [*Entering the door pulling Ickie behind her by the hair.*]
- You do that. And I'll tell Laban where all his spotted lambs have been disappearing to. Ickie here has been telling me how you boys come by your beer money.

The three shepherds look at each other and hang their heads.

Fleatree
- We have to do something. We can't just let Manly and Ickie keep stealing our sheep. What about law and order? We can't live without law and order.

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... *continued from page 14*

Solomanda

- I have a solution. Just tie a bell on each of them. Then if they try to steal a sheep, you'll hear them coming.

The three shepherds look at each other and nod.

Fleatree

- You're a wise woman, Solly. But you've got to learn the difference between a kid and a lamb. One grows up like ewe and the other like ram.

Act VI

The three shepherds are back at their fire once more.

Jumpy [*Straightening up and glancing both ways.*]

- What was that? Did you hear that?

Sheepnose

- Sure, it's the sheep snoring in their sleep.

Fleatree

- Well, at least we had some excitement tonight. The night's almost half over. What will life be like without Manly....

Jumpy

- You figure that's the last we've seen of his dirty tricks?

Sheepnose

- I would have enjoyed giving him a good walloping with my staff. He's always making fun of me. I'm tired of being the butt of his jokes.

Jumpy

- Listen. Hear that? You don't think they're already back for another try, do you?

Fleatree

- It's bells. No, it's like raindrops falling into a mountain stream. It's the stars: they're stirring and tinkling like leaves in a soft breeze. They're all moving, fluttering down toward us like fireflies made of moonlight.

Sheepnose

- Look, look how bright! The stars are sending out red and gold threads like spider webs of light.

Suddenly an angel appears.

Jumpy

- It's a ghost!

Jumpy falls to his knees, shielding his eyes. Fleatree slowly rises, standing erect and trembling, as if in a trance. Sheepnose begins to rise, lurches forward and then tumbles backward. He raises himself on his elbows as the angel begins to speak.

Angel

- Do not be afraid. I bring you great news, news to make you rejoice, great news not just for you but for all the people. Tonight a baby has been born in the town of David. He is your Savior, the long-awaited Messiah. This is how you will know him: he will be wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

The light brightens, then suddenly all is dark again.

Slowly the shepherds get up and sit down, looking about and blinking. They look at one another rubbing their eyes.

Jumpy [*Stuttering*]

- Th-th-that c-c-couldn't have been another trick, could it? D-d-did it look like Ickie?

Sheepnose

- You think... you think they were talking about Manly's baby?

Fleatree [*Still staring out into the night, speaking slowly.*]

- Manly didn't have no baby;

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A woman of noble character

Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

Sometimes it's a small world. On the table in EBC's library was a poster board with old snapshots of former staff and students. One of the photographs seemed to jump out at me. the woman's face looked so familiar. She looked like the grown-up version of a girl who lived across the street from me when I was a kid; someone whom I hadn't seen in almost thirty years. The more I looked at her, the more certain I became.

Memories flooded back

So I grabbed the poster board and tracked down the librarian to see if he knew who she was. Sure enough he identified her as Tina. Apparently she had worked as the college librarian for many years and had only left three or four years ago, when she and her husband moved to another city. Memories of our friendship flooded back to me.

Tina was a few years older than me. When my parents would go away for a couple of weeks' vacation they would ask her to come and stay with me. This went on for three winters starting when I was around fourteen. She really was a great girl, kind and pleasant, infinitely patient with me. She had a good sense of humor and frequently included me in her weekend activities, which were centred mainly on her church youth group.

For my part I made sure she earned the money my parents paid her. It was nothing personal. I was obnoxious to anybody in authority over me. I played my music loudly, had a tendency to break curfew, and would often smoke a cigarette in the house when Tina wasn't there. But she never became angry with me, and she never ratted me out to my parents. Not even the time when I burned a hole in my mother's favourite table cloth. (Guess she figured the evidence would speak for itself.)

Arguing over milk

The closest we ever came to arguing was one Sunday afternoon when we ran out of milk. Since I ate cereal every morning, I was concerned about Monday's breakfast. It was bitterly cold that day and I asked Tina to drive me to the only variety store in town. She refused. I was shocked. In her usual non-judgmental way she simply told me she couldn't square her conscience with going to a store on Sunday. I told her she didn't have to go in, she could just drive the getaway car. No deal. I asked her what she thought she would eat for breakfast the next day. She didn't care. I was so annoyed I practically marched to the store and back. I could not believe she would be so unreasonable.

But the image that comes to mind to this day when I think of Tina has nothing to do with Sunday shopping. What I remember is how each and every night she would lie in bed reading the Bible. Sometimes when I passed by she was there with her hands folded and eyes closed.

Amazed at her sweet devotion

Looking back I am amazed at her sweet devotion. I am also convinced she probably offered up more than one prayer for her rambunctious housemate.

Like so many people along my path, Tina was an example of genuine Christian faith. I'm certain God put her and others in my life to point me toward himself. There were neighbors, teachers, church volunteers and even an employer. Most of them would never guess the contributions they made to my faith journey. These days when I wonder what possible impact I might have on the young people I work with, I think back to Tina and how she must have felt.

After all the grief I gave her I would love to see her face if she ever learns what's become of me. What a delight it would be to meet her again and tell her how much I love God and how my life has changed. Not only did I give up cigarettes and rebellion (mostly), if we run out of milk on Sunday, on Monday we'll eat eggs and toast for breakfast!

Heidi VanDerSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont.

Detail from The Madonna and Child, by Andrea Mantegna, ca. 1490.

HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATION

Five Shepherds and a Baby

... continued from page 15

that was our sheep. And Manly and Ickie couldn't have made all that light and that sound.

Jumpy
- Then what was it?

Fleatree
- Angels. Real, live angels. Shining, talking angels. Boy-oh-boy!

Sheepnose
- Angels? What would angels be doing way out here?

Jumpy
- They said there's a baby... the Messiah. Right here. In Bethlehem.

Fleatree
- In a manger, they said. [*He rises and takes a step.*] I'm going down to take a look. Are you coming, Jumpy? Sheepnose?

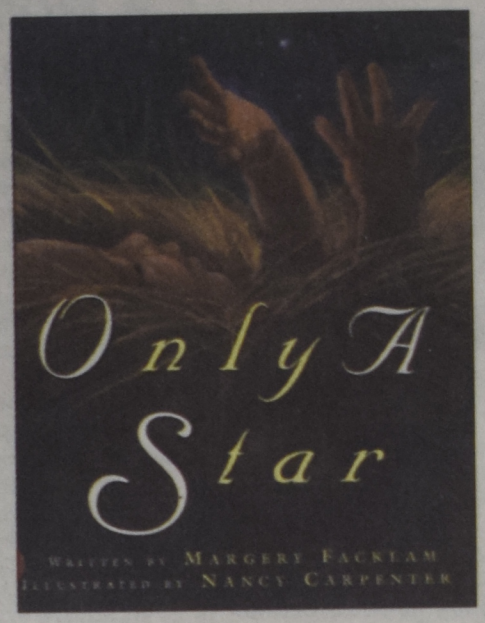
Sheepnose
- Boy-oh-boy! Two babies in one night!

Fleatree
- The other one wasn't no baby, remember — it was a lamb. This one better not be, or someone's going to pay dearly.

Jumpy
- Wait! I'm not staying out here by myself. I just can't take another fright. This darkness scares me; but soon it'll be light. Yes, light!

THE END

The Christmas Season



Collected and reviewed by Jeanette Romkema

The Christmas season is many things to many people. Below is a collection of books that celebrates the birth of Christ, remembers some classics, and offers fun activities for the holidays. Enjoy!

Only A Star

Written by Margery Facklam, illustrated by Nancy Carpenter
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 1996
ISBN 0-8028-5174-6 32pp
Religious picture book for all ages.

Stimulated by the author's child's question: "What were the trimming's that first Christmas morning?" Facklam offers a deeply moving and insightful poem as a reflective answer. "What brightened the stable to welcome the Child? Only a Star. But it glistened on dewdrops and turned them to diamonds. Spidery threads became ribbons of silk…A dragonfly hovered on wings of clear crystal scattering the light in the rainbow of gems." Rich pastel colours, non-traditional perspective, and eight creatures' unique gifts of love, communicate the miracle of Christ's birth.

Snowman: Snow Creatures, Crafts, & Other Winter Projects

Written by P. Cole, F. Frankeny, L. Jonath, illustrated by F. Frankeny
San Francisco: Chronicle books, 1999
ISBN 0-8118-2554-X 80pp
"How-to" picture book for all ages.

All you need is a little snow, a bag of vegetables, and some odds & ends from around the house to create all thirty snow recipes contained in this 16x21cm book. Create characters from Snowby Dick to PicasSnow to Stega-snow-rus, and spectacular scenes like a winter palace, a snow green, and an arctic hearth. This high quality, *water resistant* book offers hours of wacky fun with step-by-step instructions, photo-illustrations, and helpful material lists and tips. Bring on the "Snowday"!

Story of Christmas

Written by Sister Wendy
New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1997
ISBN 3-7913-1887-X 29pp
Religious/information picture book for primary grades and older.

An art lesson, a history book, an aesthetic experience, a celebration of Christ's birth; this book offers a wealth of interpretations and reflections on the events of the Nativity. Including painting by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), Georges de la Tour (15-1652), Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), as well as anonymous artists from the 12th and 13th century, the visual text covering a period of 800 years is a feast for the eye and heart. Sister Wendy offers insights, observation, words of caution, and words of invitation to those interested in appreciating and understanding this religious collection. Truly a unique book.

The Beautiful Christmas Tree

Written Charlotte Zolotow, illustrated by Yan Nascimbene
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999
ISBN 0-395-91365-9 32pp
Fiction picture book for ECE - intermediate grades.

A dying Christmas tree is nursed by to life by a caring man who believes that "beauty is as beauty does". Though his snobbish neighbours have a difficult time understanding his kindness and respect for his surroundings, many experience the true meaning of Christmas through the beauty his hands create. The story is straightforward and the illustrations are in minimalist style, but the message is deep. A great book to read this winter about friendship, humility, and taking pleasure in the small things of life.

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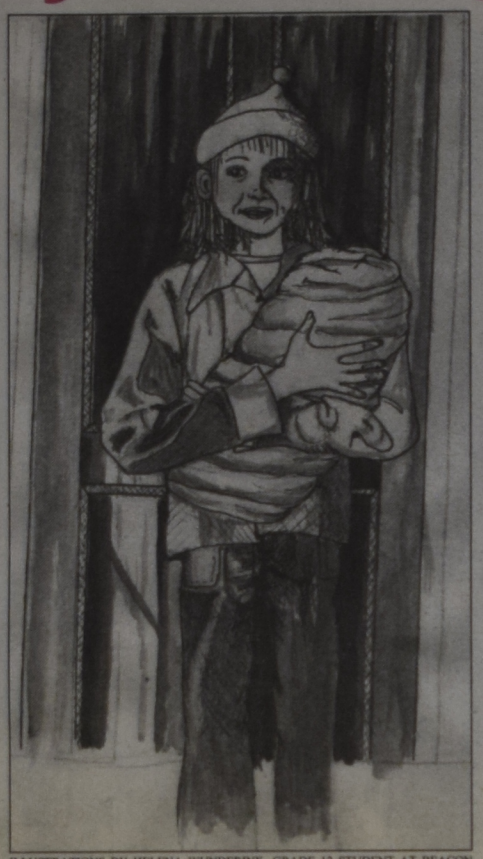
Christmas

Not so pretty in the manger

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



ILLUSTRATIONS BY HELENA WUNDERINK, GRADE 12 STUDENT AT BEACON CHRISTIAN HIGH, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

It seemed strange that after my older sister Kristi told us so many bizarre stories about kidnapped and murdered babies, a girl, who looked like Kristi and Mary of Bethlehem combined, should bring us a wounded baby on Christmas Eve.

This is how it happened.

Dad was reading *The Lion The Witch, and The Wardrobe* to my little sister Brittany, when outside Gospel started barking joyfully like a choir of angels.

Gospel wasn't a guard dog. All he wanted was company, and he loved to announce the good news of guests arriving. Years ago Kristi had found him at the side of the road, an abandoned golden retriever pup. Mom and Dad said we had enough animals to populate the Garden of Eden, and we weren't adopting any more. But Kristi pleaded, "I need this dog. It's the gospel truth!"

Such intense love and hunger filled her eyes. So, Mom and Dad gave in. Gospel stayed.

"Check who it is, James," Mom said to me.

I drew back the curtains and gasped.

Brittany flew off Dad's lap. "Is it Kristi?" she squealed.

A few months ago, Kristi was admitted to a psychiatric hospital. She's schizophrenic. After that she went to a group home. One day she up and left, and walked miles to come home to us. We were out shopping when she arrived. Brittany was the first one in the house because she didn't have to help carry in the groceries. I heard her surprised shriek. She ran back to tell us, and crashed into me. I dropped my grocery bag, cracking the eggs. Mom's face cracked, too, as she dropped her bags and hugged Kristi.

Ever since then, Brittany expected Kristi to come home again soon.

Was it Kristi coming up the driveway, carefully carrying a bundle in her arms? I wondered.

"I don't know who it is," I said.

Mom put down her magazine. She went to the front door and opened it. "Quiet, Gospel!" she shouted.

A minute later, she said cheerfully, "Come in."

"Hi," a teenage girl said.

When I saw her, my stomach flip-flopped. She was about Kristi's age, and her blonde shaggy hair and green eyes resembled my sister's.

The girl stomped her snowy boots on the mat. "I'm Rena. My mom sent me over," she explained. "Mom's on crutches, otherwise she would have come." Rena unwrapped a blue cloth swathing the bundle in her arms. "Is he yours?"

"You found him!" Brittany squealed.

Rena held the baby like my Aunt Melody taught me to carry her newborn, cradled in the crook of her arm with the head well supported. She didn't have to prop up the baby's head. She could have slung him over her shoulder.

I liked her because she didn't do that.

"Someone wrecked him," Rena said.

"Let me see!" Dad exclaimed. Rena handed the baby to him. We gathered around. Dad gingerly fingered the dents and scratches on the baby's face, and discovered the gaping hole in his side.

"Looks like someone took a knife to him," Dad said, shocked. His voice sounded hollow like it did so often lately.

"It doesn't seem like his bones are broken," Rena offered.

Then she laughed nervously. "Of course not. It's wood. What I mean is, the arms and legs look all right."

"Where did you find him?" Mom asked.

"By the Thames Street walkway, you know, just off Matthew Street. It's about a ten minute walk from here. I live beside it. Lots of people walk through there. The fence is mostly just busted mesh and some jagged metal posts. When I brought the garbage to the curb early yesterday morning, it was snowing. Everything was kind of shadowy. I saw a lump jabbed on a post. Like, you know, I almost screamed when I came closer to check it out. I thought someone had killed a kid by impaling him."

I cringed.

Rena's bizarre story sounded like Kristi's crazy talk.

Rena continued, "But then I saw it was just made of wood. I inside. My mom said it looked like a baby Jesus from some manger scene."

"So, how did you know it was ours?" Dad asked.

"Later, my mom asked me to run over to the variety store for a newspaper. I saw your poster above the candy canes."

"I knew the posters were a good idea!" I exclaimed. It had been my suggestion to place them in stores. How else would we get back the child that years ago Grandpa had carved from pine, along with Mary and Joseph, the Magi, and the shepherds? How else would I calm the internal earthquake that shook me when he was stolen? Somehow it seemed that the kidnapping of baby Jesus made Kristi's paranoid stories true.

"Daddy will fix the baby Jesus!" Brittany declared.

And I knew my Dad would. He's great at mending everything. He repairs the smallest things like doll's toes or eyes, and the biggest ones like tractors and trucks.

"He'll do it!" I agreed. "Won't you, Dad?"

Dad was quiet for a moment. "No," he answered, in a shaky, tired voice. But he sounded determined, too. I knew he didn't want us to question him right now, and he wasn't going to change his mind if Brittany or I started bugging him.

But Brittany didn't realize that. She cried, "We have to fix the baby Jesus!"

What was he thinking, my fix-it-all Dad? My Dad, who couldn't wait to repair stuff because broken things annoyed him.

"Well, whatever," Rena said. "If you want a broken baby Jesus, it's up to you. But I agree with the kid. He won't look so pretty in the manger."

"You're right," Dad acknowledged. "He won't. Thanks so much for returning him."

"Like I said, my mom made me come. You can thank her."

"Please do that for us," Mom said. "But won't you first come in for some hot chocolate and popcorn? We were just going to have some."

"No, I've got plans. See you later." When Rena left, Gospel barked enthusiastically.

"Would you put the baby back in the manger while I finish reading this chapter to Brittany?" Dad asked me. He handed me the broken body. I carried it to the basement and set it on the ping pong table. As I dressed into my coat, boots, and mittens, I wondered, why won't Dad fix the baby Jesus? He could easily fill the hole in the baby's side with putty, and sand down the scratches on his face.

Outside in the brittle air, Gospel waltzed on his chain when he saw me. I loosened the clasp, and he danced around me as I walked through the deep snow, cradling the baby.

I laid him in the manger.The lifeless, pine figures surrounding the manger seemed animated, somehow, in the full moon's light reflected on the snow. The Magi appeared royal and reverent. Mary and Joseph's faces looked like Mrs. Slippert's does in church when she sings "Holy, Holy, Holy." And the shepherds, oblivious to stupid sheep and manure-caked sandals, seemed to kneel in genuine adoration. Each was washed clean, flawless in the shimmering brilliance. And I stood in that radiant circle, too, with Gospel barking boisterously beside me.

Then I understood why Dad wouldn't fix the baby Jesus. With the gouges, the scratches, and the blows, he looked more than ever like what he would become for us. His future was in his disfigured face and in his pierced side.

Some things can't be fixed, I mused. Like what's happening to Kristi. And other things shouldn't be fixed. They tell more of the truth when they aren't.

"Come on, Gospel," I said. Kristi's dog happily romped in the snow with me until Mom called me in for hot chocolate.

Christmas

The Heart

Beatrice Vandervelde

Rosslyn made her way to the west doors after the service. Half-hidden in an alcove under the balcony stairs, she suddenly came upon a Christmas display. Life-size figures of Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, the three wisemen, and several animals stood among real hay. All eyes were focused on the manger and the tiny baby lying there.

"Neat-o!"

How long had it been there? Why was it tucked away under the stairs? Most people would miss it. *She* wouldn't have noticed, not if she'd taken her normal route out of the huge church. They should move the whole scene to the platform up front, beside the pulpit. Then everyone could enjoy it.

Or maybe to the green outside. All the people driving past the abbey would notice, even if they weren't attending a service.

As she walked to her friend's house, Rosslyn puzzled on about it. Suddenly it flashed through her mind, "Yoko and Nouki should see it. They'd love it." She hugged herself with excitement. "I'll bet they've never seen anything like it."

"No!" Mr. Kitahara barked angrily. "This is more." He cupped his hand as if it was holding a burning coal. "This is the heart!" he shouted, shaking his raised hand back and forth furiously.

The Kitahara kids — her little charges. Their family, on exchange from Japan, lived next door in the housing complex in which Rosslyn and her aunt had their apartment. There wasn't much for the children to do on the university grounds, no other kids lived there, so Rosslyn played with them whenever she could. They loved seeing her, squealing with delight every time she showed her face.

As soon as homework was done that following week, Rosslyn knocked on their door. "May I show Yoko and Nouki something at the abbey?" she asked their mother. She spoke slowly, hoping to be understood.

"Roz-leen, Roz-leen," the children chorused as soon as they heard Rosslyn's voice. They rushed toward her. "We play?" they begged.

"Sure," Rosslyn agreed. "But first I want to show you something."

Eight-year-old Yoko rattled something in Japanese to her mother. Mrs. Kitahara smiled shyly and nodded.

LINOCUTS BY JEAN E. MERKEL

The Kitahara kids loved seeing Rosslyn, squealing with delight every time she showed her face.

Immediately the children bundled up in their new snowsuits and boots. Once outside, they dashed toward the swings, a favorite pastime for both of them. But after a few pushes Rosslyn urged, "Come on. I have something very special to show you today." She took one of their hands in each of hers and they skipped along, then played follow the leader, taking turns at suggesting how they walk.

"Where we going?" Yoko asked. "It far?"

"You know. The abbey," Rosslyn reminded her.

"Abbey? What is abbey?"

"Never mind. Before you know it, we'll be there." At the building, she pulled open the heavy wooden door and hustled the children inside.

Yoko and Nouki hung back, awed by the huge space, the quiet, the half-dark. "Oooo, so beeg," Yoko breathed. She gazed all around her at the high ceilings, the huge pillars, the colorful windows.

"No, no, this isn't it," Rosslyn explained. "Keep going." Quickly she led them along the aisle to the little alcove under the stairs.

"See?" Rosslyn pointed, then stepped back.

Four-year-old Nouki stared at the scene open-mouthed. He didn't make a peep, probably a little afraid of being so close to the huge animals. But Yoko, four years older, was her usual inquisitive self. She took in the stable scene — the figures, the animals, the hay. With a puzzled frown she turned to Rosslyn.

"Why they kneel?" she wanted to know.

"They're worshiping."

"Why? He only baby."

Rosslyn frowned. How could she explain.

"Is he a prince?"

"Sort of."

Suddenly Rosslyn laughed with delight. "You're right," she told Yoko with a chuckle. "He's the prince of *all* princes." She couldn't have explained it better.

"Humph!" Yoko scoffed. "Should be in palace." She turned away.

"No. That's just the point," Rosslyn began, but then she stopped. How *could* she explain — the prince of all princes, lying on prickly hay in a manger, among animals....

In spite of her scorn, Yoko told big stories about the creche at home. She was so enamored with it that her father complained bitterly to Rosslyn's aunt, "I don't want Rosslyn taking my children to the abbey. I don't want them in church."

"We only looked at the creche," Rosslyn explained. "Yoko didn't even like it."

"It seems to have made more of an impression than you realize. Can you go over to apologize?"

Reluctantly Rosslyn walked over. She tried to explain to Mr. Kitahara that all she'd done was show the children the creche. It was part of Christmas. Hadn't he taken them to the tree lighting on the green earlier that month? Hadn't the children seen Santa Claus in the mall? And hadn't he bought a tape with Christmas carols? "That's all part of the American Christmas," she explained.

"No!" Mr. Kitahara barked angrily. "This is more." He cupped his hand as if it was holding a burning coal. "This is the heart!" he shouted, shaking his raised hand back and forth furiously.

Rosslyn backed away. She had never seen him so angry — as if he could throttle her. "I'm sorry," she said again, and quickly made herself scarce.

"Wow, was he steaming!" she told her friend at school the next day. "Why do you suppose he was so upset?"

"Maybe he thought you were trying to convert his kids."

"By showing them the nativity scene?"

"We-ell." Hazel shrugged her shoulders. "What religion are they?"

"Beats me," Rosslyn answered. "They never go anywhere on the weekend except shopping."

"Why *did* you show it?"

Rosslyn shrugged. "I just thought that it was neat, that they'd get a kick out of it. I never thought about any meaning."

"Right," Hazel soothed. "Maybe Mr. Kitahara just doesn't like questions."

"True. When Yoko's curious about something, she can grill your socks off." They chuckled to think of the little girl badgering her Dad with questions about the nativity.

But Rosslyn didn't laugh when Mr. Kitahara no longer allowed his children to play with her. At first she still saw them by the window of their apartment. They would wave, and smile. But they never stayed long, as if someone was ordering them, "Get away from that window." A few days later the sheers hung straight, no longer parted so the children could look out.

"You tried your best," her aunt encouraged her. "Maybe the holidays will change things."

But the holidays didn't make a bit of difference. And the strange thing was, Rosslyn still didn't understand it. Why all the fuss?

Now if she'd taken them to a service. If she'd told them stories about the stained-glass windows. Or if the kids had been around for one of the morning processionals.... More than a hundred black-robed monks would file in from the back during the opening song. In two long rows they'd sing their way down the centre aisle, bow to the front, to each other, and then face the people from the platform pews like a huge choir. That was impressive, the movement down the aisle and up front like a slow dance. And the singing. What strong voices. Actually everything at the abbey services was unique — the organ, the special music, even the readers.

But she hadn't taken them to a service. All she'd done was show them the Christmas display tucked away in that hidden corner. She hadn't even been able to explain what it was all about.

After the service on Christmas morning, Rosslyn lingered once more at the creche. She stared at that familiar scene of the shepherds and the wisemen worshiping the baby in the manger. How was Jesus' life a *demonstration* of God's love, as the priest said. What did that mean? If only she'd listened better.

She blinked and shook her head. She mustn't dawdle. She had promised Aunt D she'd hurry right back. They were invited to the Mueller's for Christmas dinner and she knew what *that* meant — a feast! She turned to dash away and promptly ran into Brother Mike.

"Whoa, there," he said as they bumped. With a big grin he extended his hands and sandwiched hers in between. "A blessed Christmas, Rosslyn. I take it you're staying here?"

"Yes."

Christmas

Yoko was her usual inquisitive self. She took in the stable scene — the figures, the animals, the hay. With a puzzled frown she turned to Rosslyn. "Why they kneel?" she wanted to know.

She hesitated, then plunged in. "Brother Mike, what did the priest mean?" Rosslyn asked earnestly. "Jesus' life, a demonstration of God's love — what did he mean?"

"Holidays," Brother Mike chuckled. "We're not in class now, you know."

"But I'm trying to understand," Rosslyn explained. "I didn't want to take Bible this year. After what happened in my family, I didn't want anything to do with God. But the way you talked about Jesus.... I'm giving God another chance but I have to understand that love bit."

"Whew!" Brother Mike pursed his lips and looked off into space.

Suddenly he glanced at Rosslyn again. "See that?" he asked, pointing to a stained-glass window. It pictured Jesus, the shepherd, cradling a sheep in his arms. "Jesus went after the lost. He cared for the sick and the lame. Now *that's* God in action."

The furrowed brow didn't vanish, but a little grunt told Brother Mike that Rosslyn had heard his words and was thinking about them. "Mull it over," he suggested. "We'll talk again. Or do you have lots of time now?"

Rosslyn's eyes widened in alarm. "Actually, I don't. We're going out for dinner and I promised my aunt I'd be right back. I've got to fly."

"Safe flight, then," the monk chuckled.

Rosslyn hurried home across the deserted campus.

Mrs. Mueller. Now there was a person filled with love. She had a large family, dogs, a catering business, yet she did all kinds of things for other people. She was always ready to help. Aunt D, too. She had been distant and cool at first, but now living with her for this year worked fairly well. And busy as she was, how often didn't she quickly pop in to visit an old person from the parish? Or shop for someone who was sick? And Father Daniel. Brother Mike.

Rosslyn sighed.

Was *she* loving? Sure, she helped out when she could, she was friendly at school, but she didn't really go out of her way, did she now? Except with Yoko and Nouki. There she had, and look where that got her?

She saw again Mr. Kitahara's furious face as he shouted. "This is the heart!"

Suddenly she stood stock still. "The heart?" she whispered.

She saw that cupped hand of his, not as if juggling a burning coal, but holding something precious.

Picturing the manger, she began to nod.

"The heart," she whispered again. "God in loving action." And slowly a smile lit her face.

Beatrice Vandervelde writes and lives in Toronto. Jean Merkel, a freelance artist, lives in Fort Collins, Colorado.

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Book Reviews (continued)

The Christmas Season

Who Was Born This Special Day?

Written by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Leonid Gore

New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2000
ISBN 0-689-82302-9 28pp
Religious picture book for ECE - primary grades.

"Who was born this special day? Was it you, little lamb?

I was born back in early May when the breezes of spring chased winter away."

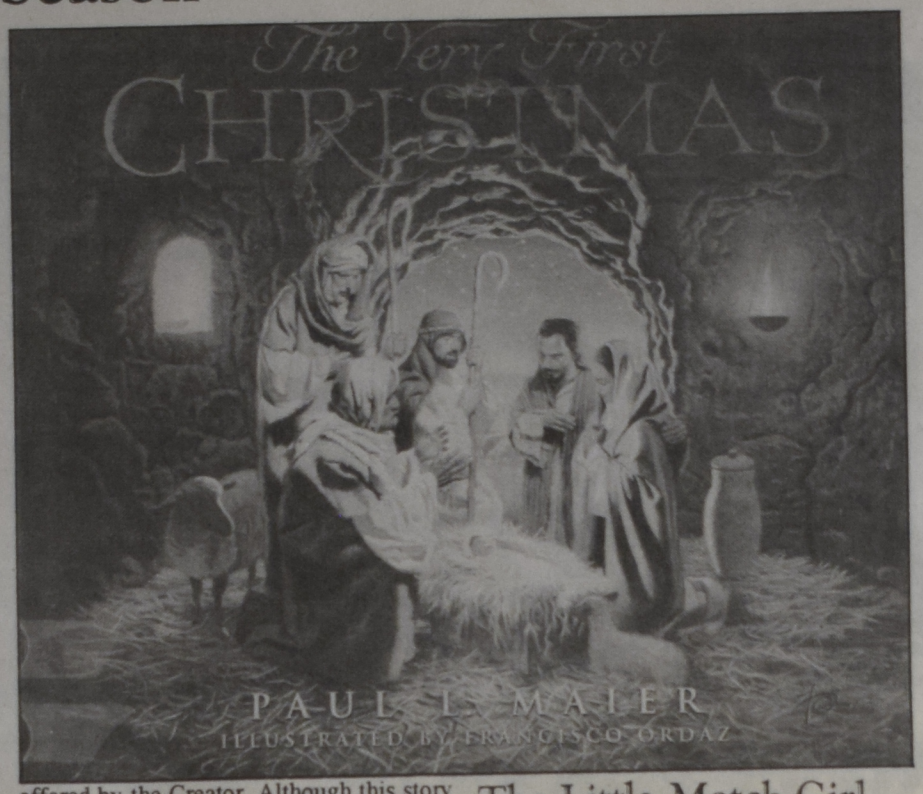
Through rhythm and rhyme all the manger animals are asked this question until the angels in the heaven proclaim that a child was born; Christ Jesus. Author Eve Bunting and illustrator Leonid Gore gently and harmoniously work to create a soothing book full of anticipation and wonder. Perfect for young children.

The Give-Away: A Christmas Story

Written and illustrated by Ray Buckley

Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999
ISBN 0-687-07186-0 32pp
Religious picture book for all ages.

In *The Give-Away* the Four-leggeds and Those Who Fly come together to save the Two-leggeds who have lost the sense of spiritual direction in their lives. The birds and animals make enormous personal sacrifices but the ultimate gift is the Christ child, offered by the Creator. Although this story is fiction, it was inspired from the Lakota expression that humanity, animals, birds, insects, and plants are *mitakuye oyasin*, "all my relations", meaning that Christ came to restore humanity to "all our relations". The give-away is a widespread practice among Native people: they offer the things they have to those around them, publicly stating the worthlessness of material wealth. A provocative book.



The Little Match Girl

Adapted and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney

New York: Phyllis Fogelman Books, 1999
ISBN 0-8037-2314-8 32pp
Fairy tale picture book for primary grades and older.

A poor little girl is sent out into the bitter cold to make some money to feed her father and four siblings. She roams the streets trying to sell artificial flowers and matches. After losing her shoes, which are much too big, she sits in a corner to warm herself, delirious with hunger. Although she is found frozen to death the next morning, she is finally free: free of hunger, pain, and poverty. Three-time Caldecott Honor Winner Jerry Pinkney offers rich water-color paintings full of detail, and imagination. A classic by Hans Christian Andersen.

The Very First Christmas

Written by Paul L. Maier, illustrated by Francisco Ordaz

St Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1998
ISBN 0-570-05064-2 32pp
Religious picture book for primary grades and older.

Eight-year-old Chris loved to crawl into bed and fall asleep to his mother's stories of fictional places and people. One night however he asked his mother for one "about *real* people and *real* things that *really* happened". This is the night he heard the *real* story of Christmas and fell in love with "God's story." Using dual text — the mother and son's conversation about the story, and the Biblical narrative — as well as vibrant illustrations, the book offers a journey into history for your child to discover the miracle of Christ's birth. This promises to be a new Christmas treasure.

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their best wishes in this
Christmas Season
and for the New Year 2001.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us ....John 1:14

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all the joys

His love brings

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Mrs. Anne Veenstra
Mr. Bastian Smouter
Mr. Peter & Mrs. Karen Baarda
Mrs. Cornelia Diemer
Mrs. Uitze & Mrs. Hilda van der Wier
Mr. Gerlof van Marrum
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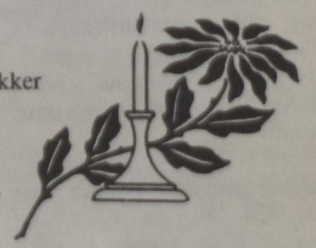

News Comment

Nose for News

Bert Hielema

I AM BACK FROM THE gigantic United Nations conference on Climate Change, the biggest convention ever held in The Hague. When I emigrated from the Netherlands in 1951, I can remember that one of the reasons for me leaving was the weather. I was in this beautiful city for 16 days and the weather proved remarkably steady: rain every day. Not cold — about eight or nine degrees, but no sun. I have a solar watch, and with so little sunshine and such short days, one day my watch just stopped because it just did not receive enough light.

Here are some impressions. On my first day a funny thing happened. I couldn't come on Monday when the conference opened, so I came on Tuesday and, lo and behold, in several places there were delicious cakes for the taking: fruit pies and banana cream delicacies. Being a person with a sweet tooth, which at home occasionally suffers from the lack of these pastries due to our self-imposed diet, on that first day I was able to secure three pieces for personal consumption. It was only later that I understood why these treats were there: they had been ordered for the opening ceremony to celebrate the arrival of Queen Beatrix, but the security people were afraid of a pie-in-the-face incident and ordered them to be held overnight. I, of course, benefited from that decision.

AS A MEMBER OF THE press, I enjoyed some perks: access to the most modern computer hardware and unlimited time on the Internet. I had my own laptop with me, but using one provided by the conference proved a lot easier and cheaper and much faster. Another privilege was also free: unlimited travel on the extensive transit system, saving me scores of guilders. Although the Canadian dollar is low compared to the U.S. dollar, it is high vis-à-vis the guilder: I got Fl.1.50 for each dollar, an excellent exchange rate. Still, even at that rate, a cup of coffee costs more here than in my hometown and it's only half the size. But then, brazen me, I discovered a corner in the huge building where everything was for free: free fruit juices, free pastry, sandwiches, coffee. The European Union footed the bill. Still another money-saver was the telephone: I could phone free all over the world from the press room. So I kept my far-flung family up-to-date. Why not?

EVERY PARTICIPANT had a badge, without which there was no access to the grounds. The press had an orange name tag on which also my newspaper, the *Christian Courier*, appeared, in itself good promotion for our good periodical. The NGOs — Non Government Agencies such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, World Wildlife Fund and scores of others — came in green, while the official delegates from the 180-odd nations wore pink.

The first week the NGO people were in the majority; the second week, with the arrival of the numerous delegations, pink prevailed. The NGOs acted as official opposition, and I was impressed with their creativity, insight and expertise. On my return, I vowed to support these organizations more. We really need them. The issues at hand were often complicated, and they were helpful in explaining the pros and cons of the different propositions.

FOR SOME REASON ALL people wore suits here. Good thing I had taken a couple along. The world's environmental organizations gave regular briefings to the press each day. Several smaller nations combined forces to face the power of the large countries. A good example was the so-called AOSIS group, which stands for Alliance of Small Island States, some of which will disappear if the sea rises 20 cm, which is a distinct possibility, now that the entire exercise was a failure.

The world's businesses had a special display area. The technical world sees economic opportunities in carbon reduction: windmills, solar energy, natural gas, hydrogen-driven technologies, just to mention a few, and they too bombarded me with promotional material. The amount of publications offered were so numerous that if I took along everything available, my suitcases would have downed the plane on my return trip.

AIRPLANES REMIND ME of security, which was as tight here as in airports. Police were everywhere around the large convention centre. The place was saturated with black-blue uniforms: it looked a virtual police state. This was also true in other parts of the city, around the Peace Palace where the Balkan people are being tried, and also, occasionally, in the inner city. One Sunday night when my wife and I walked home from a special ecumenical "Climate Day" church service in the Klooster Kerk — the church the Queen attends — we almost couldn't get into my brother's condo. It happens to be close to the Ministry of the Environment, where an official reception was being held for all those who attended the Climate Conference. During the proceedings some 200 young people from the U.S.A. held low-key, thoughtful demonstrations there in support of the Global Warming treaty.

I am afraid that Canada and the U.S.A. torpedoed the treaty, for which they received a lot of justified criticism. They insisted on using so-called 'sinks' instead of promising to make a determined effort to reduce CO_2 emissions, which are caused by our carbon-obsessed society. Blame it on Bush. Even though his initials are G.W. the same as Global Warming, he professes not to believe in it.

The entire conference stranded on this point. Chirac, the president of France — always quite outspoken in his criticism of the U.S.A. — harshly condemned the American attitude and compared the frugal French to the wasteful Yanks who, on a per capita basis, use three times as much energy. Actually the entire European community as a whole vehemently opposed using new forests as sponges — sinks — to soak up the CO_2 (Carbon Dioxide) which we in North America produce at an alarming rate. Canada and the U.S. have less than five per cent of the world's population yet produce 25 per cent of greenhouse gasses. If we don't reduce today, disaster awaits us tomorrow. That message came through loud and clear.

THE TROUBLE IS THAT Bush and Cheney are two people who were suckled on oil. It paid for their election campaign and the pay-back is ruination of the earth. Because they are saturated with carbon, they are unable to smell the stuff. It made them rich, and never mind tomorrow. They will do nothing to stop more air pollution and so the result of this costly conference was a victory for polluters and dismal defeat for poorer nations, who now face more devastating storms and mud slides. Only extraordinary weather events, such as floods in New York or destructive tornadoes in Washington, will bring the U.S.A. and, I am sad to say, its servile lackey, Canada, back to negotiate a stop to the poisoning of the whole world.

JUST A FEW QUICK notes. The spokesman for the World Meteorology Organization said that the number of heat wave days in the major US cities would increase from 1500 to 4000 in 20 years, and heat-related deaths, now some 800 per year, will increase to 3000 by 2050. Physicians for Social Responsibility claimed that heat causes heat strokes, heat exhaustion and worsens the condition of people with heart and respiratory problems. Also hot weather brings more forest fires and more forest fires increase the amount of CO_2 in the air, which leads to more heat, which leads to more forest fires.

I ATTENDED A SESSION sponsored by the Canadian Inuit bands. It is especially in the Arctic and Antarctic circle where the temperature is rising dramatically. Although the Arctic ice floats in the sea, and its melting will not significantly raise the water levels, the Antarctic rests on solid ground. The built-up ice there, when melted, will add to already high sea levels. Especially when the permafrost melts, which is already happening, megatons of methane will be released, causing a sudden and steep rise in Global Warming.

While in The Hague, I met with a few prominent people. I had made arrangements to see Dr. Bob Goudzwaard at a church close to the convention centre. Later we had lunch together and I taped an hour-long wide-ranging interview with him. I also travelled to Hilversum to meet a former secretary of the Dutch Interchurch Bureau, Dr. H.A.M. Fiolet, who holds a double doctorate in both Protestant and Roman Catholic Theology. Dr. Fiolet was ordained a priest at the age of 26, and when asked by his superiors to study apologetics, that branch of theology that studies the defense of the Roman Catholic teachings, he developed serious misgivings about some of the doctrines of the Mother Church. I will also, in the future, report on this fruitful dialogue.

ALL IN ALL, EXCEPT FOR the open plenary session presided over by Jan Pronk, the Dutch Minister of the Environment, my stay was quite interesting, even fascinating at times. In the plenary session each of the 180 participating nations got five minutes to publicly state its views, something I could endure for no more than half an hour. To be a politician must be tough: a life full of boring speeches which have little or no relevance to reality but are uttered only for the sake of the people back home, who never benefit from it anyway.

Bert Hielema voted PC. In spite of my vote for Joe Clark, whom I see as one of the few honest politicians, if there is such a thing, his party barely managed to retain official status.

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News Digest

Stockwell as Doris Day

OTTAWA — An Internet petition demanding that Stockwell Day change his first name to Doris surpassed three per cent of Canadian voters, and has logged more than 478,000 electronic signatures. The petition was launched by comedian Rick Mercer, of CBC-TV's *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, reports the *Globe and Mail*. Under one Canadian Alliance proposal, a petition by three per cent of Canadian voters would be enough to trigger a binding referendum.

Ducking a question on whether the spoof undermines his party's position on allowing citizens to launch a referendum, Day commented: "I think it's a great show ... and all I can say is, whether we're successful on any of these changes, *que sera sera*."

Money weighs heavily on church

ST. MARY'S, Wash (Religion Today) — A big money gift is weighing heavily on members of a small church. St. Mary's United Methodist Church in St. Mary's, Wash., received a gift of $60 million in October, enough to pay its annual budget for the next 210 years, according to news reports.

Warren Bailey, who attended the church as a child, left the money when he died at age 88.

Parishioners and church leaders are at a loss for what to do with it. "The Bible has a lot to say about money," pastor Derek McAleer told *The New York Times*. "Most of the time it's a warning." Leaders have decided that they won't use the gift to pay the church's annual budget. Trustees will meet in December to make a recommendation.

Several other churches in town are praying for the newly wealthy congregation. "Having that much money can have a negative impact on any church," Thomas Turner, a Baptist, said. "I'm glad I don't have to deal with it."

Finnish bad writing

TORONTO — The Finnish Association of Bad Literature plans to crown the country's author who is most inaccurate, who pens long diatribes about unimportant issues and uses an inappropriate and incomprehensible writing style. Entries closed Nov. 10 and were limited to a maximum of 20 pages, reports the *Globe and Mail*. The winner will be awarded a manure fork.

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There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged pci, but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original (which we will return) or a downloadable Internet image.

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We offer a $25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in *Christian Courier* and to parents who announce the birth of a child in our paper. Please let us know when placing your ad that you want to take advantage of this offer.

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Christmas Greetings

The Lord's blessing at Christmas and in the year to come.
Mrs. Grace Sliekers,
(Holland Christian Homes)
Palmetto, Fl.

Births

van HATTEM:
Herman and Ida van Hattem of RR 2, Berwick, N.S., are thankful to the Lord for the safe arrivals of two granddaughters, our ninth and tenth grandchildren: on October 4, 2000

Mackenzie Brooklynn van Hattem
daughter of Randy & Rhonda and sister of Jesse, Kirkland and Courtney and on November 9, 2000

Madison Engelina Carree
daughter of Robert & Caroline and sister of Maria, Kaitlyn and Chelsea

Birthday

With thankfulness to the Lord, we would like to congratulate our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

MARGARET VRIEND
(nee HOFLAND)

who hopes to celebrate her 90th birthday, the Lord willing, on Monday, December 11, 2000.
With love from your children:
Trudy & Dick Stienstra — Dunnville
John Vriend & Barb — Brantford
Willa & Gary Ellwood — Chatham
Tina & Bernie Bax — Sarnia
Jake & Minka Vriend — Guelph
and from your 20 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren.
"The Lord is My Shepherd." Ps.23:1
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Anniversaries

60th Wedding Anniversary

We thank God for His faithfulness and blessings to our parents

ITE and ALI DEBOER
(nee AFMAN)

and our families!
We hope to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on December 20, 2000.
Their children:
Pete & Peg
Cheryl, Karen & Doug (Emily), Christine, Jennifer & Dan (Tim)
Alice & Bert
Daryl & Annemarie (Jordan, Heather, Kyle), Ron & Gloria (Karen), Carolyn, Kevin
Tom & Joanne
Susan & Jason, Shelley
Klaas & Ann
Michael & Julie (Adam), Jodi & Robin (Jayman), Nathan, Dana
Martha & Bob
Dave, Jocelyn
John & Dianne
Sharon, Brian, Julie, Andy, Nick, Kaitlan
Al & Harriet
Anthony, Ryan, Renee
Theresa & John
Steve, Lori, Adam
Ed & Teresa
Tyler, Jordan, Bear
Address: 34546 York Ave, Abbotsford, BC V2S 2W9

For advertising rates and info, call: 1-800-969-4838.

Anniversaries

Broek op Langedijk the Neth. — Brampton Ontario
January 4
"Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life." (Rev.2:10b)
With thankful hearts we hope to celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of

TED and BERNICE FERWERDA
(nee DE BOER)

The Ferwerda family:
Cathy & Greg Williams
Amy & Ojav Lohr (Joshua, Andrew), Joy Willams, Tara & Luke Vanderkamp
Ron & Nancy Ferwerda
Russell, Mallory, Adrienne, Warren
Fred Ferwerda & Gerty Riemer
Annika, Maija
Bryan & Christine Ferwerda
Daniel, Patricia, Sarah, Alida, Michael
Open House will be held from 2 - 4 p.m. on January 6, 2001, at the New Life Christian Reformed Church, 400 Victoria Rd., Guelph. Best wishes only.
Address: 35 Kingknoll Drive, King Tower 1101, Brampton ON L6Y 5G5

1960 — Dec. 17 — 2000
With joy and thanksgiving to the Lord, we wish to announce the 40th wedding anniversary
of our parents and grandparents

JIM and GRACE HAAS

Congratulations! We pray that God will continue to bless you with health and happiness.
With love from all of us!
Jim & Judy Haas
Sarah, Jennifer
Peter & Diana Slager
Melissa, Scott, Amanda, Stephanie
Ed & Wilma Haas
Erica, Lindsay, Kelly
Address: R R 7 Woodstock, Ontario N4S 7W2

1950 — November 30 — 2000
"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
With hearts full of joy we announce the 50th anniversary of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

WIM (Bill) and GRIETJE (Grace) KOOPMAN (nee KLINGENBERG)

God is good!
Andy & Lucille — Embro
Mark & Kim (Emily), Mike & Kelly (Hunter), Dan & Jane, Dave & Karen, Josh
Christine & Wendell — Brantford
Jeannie & Duane (Isaiah), Michelle & Bruce (James, Chelsey, Ashlea), Tara & Albert, Lenny & Sara
Gerald & Yvonne — London
Kristen & Paul, Farrah, Scott
Rob & Jane — Brantford
Nick, Paul
Bill & Charol — Cambridge
Matthew, Nathan, Mariah
Love from **all** of us!
Address: 293 Tunis St., Ingersoll ON N5C 1W9

Thank-You

We want to thank all those who made our double 50th Anniversary into such an unforgettable event, by sending your cards, coming to our Open House, and your prayerful wishes. The celebration was an overwhelming experience for which we thank our ever faithful God.
Lammert & Alice Slofstra

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Rudy & Anneke Van Hattem on their 60th wedding anniversary.

1940 — December 7 — 2000
With thankfulness to the Lord, we hope to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Dad and Mom, Opa and Oma

RUDY and ANNEKE VAN HATTEM

May the Lord continue to bless and keep them in His loving care.
That is the wish from:
Miep & Wim Palm — Heemskerk, the Neth.
Herman & Ida van Hattem — Berwick, N.S.
Henk & Irene van Hattem — Murphy Lake, N.S.
Kathy & Pete Hartenhof — Woodville, N.S.
Rudy & Alice van Hattem — Woodville, N.S.
Dick & Dianne van Hattem — St. John, N.B.
22 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.
Greetings may be sent to:
1758 Woodville Rd.,
Cambridge Station, NS B0P 1G0

1960 — December 9 — 2000
With greatful hearts we celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

HARRY and KLAASKE VANDER KOOIJ (nee MIEDEMA)

May the Lord continue to bless and keep you in His loving care.
Anna & Bert Haar — Houston, B.C.
Laura
Raymond & Susan Vander Kooij — Simcoe, Ont.
Matthew, Kendra
An Open House will be held at the Holland Marsh Senior Citizen's Hall, (Dufferin St.) on Sat., December 9, from 2 - 5 p.m. Best wishes only.
Home address: 19350 Dufferin St., RR 2, Newmarket ON L3Y 4V9

December 4, 1955 Wellandport, Ont.
With thankfulness to God for His blessing, we are happy to announce the 45th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

DIEDERT and HILLY SCHILSTRA
(nee SJAARDA)

With love from your family:
Harold & Barb Schilstra — St. Anns
Wilfred & Ingrid Schilstra — St. Anns
Christine & Jack Rintjema — Smithville
Jeff & Grace Schilstra — Smithville
Wendy & Rey Vandervliet — Smithville
Wayne & Christine Schilstra — Smithville
Michael & Carolyn Schilstra — St. Catharines
and 27 grandchildren.
Home Address: 5648 Regional Road # 65, R.R. #2, St. Anns, ON L0R 1Y0

Classifieds

Anniversary

With thankfulness to God, we celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of
TOM and SJOUK
SMIT (nee VANDERHOOP)
our loving parents and Opa and Oma.
Congratulations from:
Hank & Kathy — Chatham
Aggie & Neil — Hanover
Margaret & Barney — Beeton
Marcella — London
Theo, John — Alliston
Trudy & Peter — Oakville
5 granddaughters and 12 grandsons.
We invite family and friends to join us for an Open House, Thurs., Dec. 28, 2-4 p.m. at St. Paul's Congregational Church, 450 Park Ave. W., Chatham.
Home address: 66 Marion Ave., Chatham, Ont. N7M 5M3.

Obituaries

On October 13, 2000, the Lord took home our mother, Opoe and great-Oma
ENGELINA STIJNTJE BOERSMA
at the age of 90 years. Widow of John Boersma since 1979.
Dear mother of:
Ida & Herman van Hattem — Berwick, N.S.
Anne Boersma — Cambridge Station, N.S.
May & Jerry TeNyenhuis — Kentville, N.S.
Edith & John VanderKloet — Greenwich
Angie Rhodenizer — Stoney Plain, Alta.
Cor & Janet Boersma — Canning N.S.
Lovingly remembered by 19 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.
Funeral was held on October 16, at the Kentville Christian Reformed Church.
Correspondence address: H.& I. van Hattem, RR 2, Berwick, NS B0P 1E0

In memory of
AALTJE ROSEBOOM
(nee KIKKERT)
of Welland, Ontario, who passed away at age 75 on September 10, 2000, at Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ontario.
She is sadly missed by her husband of 55 years, Gerrit Jan and her 9 children:
John Roseboom — Gananoque, Ont.
Hennie & Dirk Koolhaas — Lindsay, Ont.
Grace & John Vitols — Unionville, Ont.
Ray & Jean Roseboom — Peterborough, Ont.
Elly & Greg Motolanez-Gallinger — St. Anns, Ont.
Jack & Nancy Roseboom — Lowbanks, Ont.
Lloyd & Bev Roseboom — Port Colborne, Ont.
Gary & Norma Roseboom — Canfield, Ont.
Antony Roseboom — Welland, Ont.
and 14 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.
Funeral service was held at Grace Christian Reformed Church, Welland, Ont., on September 13, 2000, with Rev. Peter Heerema officiating.
Interment at Pleasantview Memorial Gardens. Correspondence address: 12 Bartlett Avenue, Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5

Obituaries

Psalm 103
On November 24, 2000, our Lord took to Himself our dearly beloved husband, father and grandpa (Pake)
TOM HAMSTRA
in his 74th year.
We are thankful to the Lord for His mercy and grace. Tom will be greatly missed by his loving wife Jane, his dear children:
Thomas & Jeanette Hamstra — Bowmanville
Christina & Tony Rauwerda — Jordan
Joan & Henry Vantil — Blenheim
and his beloved grandchildren: Hannah, Ethan, Andrew, Aaron, Emma, Melissa, Nathan, Daniel, Joshua, Teresa, Matthew, Ryan, Courtney and Kristen and by all his brothers and sisters.
Tom was predeceased by one brother.
Tom was a longtime member of Covenant Christian Reformed Church of Woodstock, Ont.
The interment service of committal took place at the Oxford Memorial Park Cemetery and a memorial service was held at Maranatha CRC, Woodstock, on Monday, November 27, 2000, with Rev. Gerald Hogeterp officiating. Contributions to John Knox Christian School or the Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated.

Westergeest, Fr. Ancaster, Ont.
the Neth. Canada
Dec.15, 1935 - Nov. 17, 2000
After a long and courageous battle with cancer, the Lord has taken to Himself and into glory our dear wife, mother and grandmother
IDA (YTJE) VANHAELEN
(nee DE VRIES)
Sadly missed and always to be remembered by husband Andre and children:
Joanne & Alan Ernest
Andrew, Jeremy
Angela Vanhaelen & Ray Geurkink
Hannah
Jean B. Vanhaelen
Ephesians 2 : 8 and 9
Address: 504 Southcote Rd., Ancaster, ON L9G 2W3

MARJORIE (MAP) KOOGER
Texel Lindsay
the Neth. Ontario
Feb. 15, 1930 - Nov. 28, 2000
"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."
(3 John:4)
The Lord took home our wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, after a long illness.
Beloved wife of 50 years of Cornelus Kooger, Lindsay, Ont.
Children:
Pieter & Martha Kooger — Edmonton, Alta.
Rebecca (Dale Rudkowski), Carole (Brad Scheerschmidt), Jennifer, Michael
Marilyn & Ralph Bell — Edmonton, Alta.
Kim, Karen (Darrell Huibers), Kevin (Chainie)
Frank & Elly Kooger — Surrey, B.C.
Joel, Erin, Arlynn, Kyle
John & Joan Kooger — Cameron, Ont.
Melissa, Ryan, Caitlin
Laura & Darrel Feucht — Inwood, IA
Kristi, Jeffrey, Steven, Daniel
Charles & Marcia Kooger — Frankford, Ont.
Cari, Tatiana, Peter, David, Cintia
Joyce & Rick Triemstra — Surrey, B.C.
Marjy, Melanie, Julia, David, Bethany, Lindsey
Gwendolyn & Kevin Gesch — Oostburg, WI
Karolyn, Martina, Erika, Laura, William, Karl
Roger & Jolette Kooger — Edmonton, Alta.
Anika, Vinette, Heidi
and 7 great-grandchildren, Candace, Alysha, Sara, Jaden, Sydney, Jamie and Samantha.
Also surviving are 3 brothers and 5 sisters, all of the Netherlands.
Preceeded in death by her parents and one brother.
Address: 3 Pottinger St., Lindsay, ON K9V 3X2

Job Opportunity

HOLLAND CHRISTIAN HOMES INC.
Seeks **evening**
Janitor/Security/ Maintenance
1 full-time, 1 part-time. Experience in the health field an asset. Fax resume with references to **905-459-8667** or apply in person at **7900 McLaughlin Rd. South, Brampton, Ont.**

Aalten Fenwick
the Neth. Ont.
Dec. 31, 1922 - Nov. 16, 2000
"I know that my Redeemer lives."
(Job 19:25)
The Lord took home our beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather
HENDRIK WILLEM KORTEN
at the age of 77, after a marriage of 51 years.
He leaves behind his wife Hermien Korten (Bussink) of Fenwick, Ont.
His children:
Joanne & Gerald Heinen — Niagara-on-the-Lake
William, Richard, Michael
John Korten & Pat Wood — Niagara Falls
Jerry, Mark, Jamie (Peyton)
Bernie & Joanne Korten — Dunnville
Daryl, Danielle, Laura
Funeral service was held at Bethany Christian Reformed Church, Fenwick, Ont., Rev. R. Loerts officiated.
Correspondence address: Hermien Korten, 3436 Canboro Rd., Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0

Teachers

REXDALE, ONT.:
Timothy Christian School in Rexdale, Ontario (a suburb of Toronto), is looking for a **Grade 7 teacher** to fill a Parental Leave from **mid-March to the end of May, 2001.** Computer skills would be an asset. For more information, please contact the principal:
Trudy Jager
28 Elmhurst Dr., Rexdale ON
M9W 2J5
Phone: 416-741-5770

Aalten Fenwick
the Neth. Ont.
Dec. 31, 1922 - Nov. 16, 2000
"The Lord is my Shepherd."
The Lord took home our dearly beloved brother, brother-in-law and uncle
HENDRIK WILLEM KORTEN
Brother of:
Johan Korten (Woutje †), (Inge †) — the Netherlands
Willem Korten (†) & Klaske — the Netherlands
Anna Boers (John †) — St. Catharines
Gerrit & Dien Korten — the Netherlands
Bernard & Susan Korten — Niagara Falls
Albert & Nell Korten — Vineland
John & Margaret Korten — Ridgeway
Gerald & Nelly Korten — Dunnville
and many nieces and nephews.

Teachers

HAMILTON, ONT.:
Calvin Christian School has two maternity leave positions available:
February 1 - June 29 2001: 50% grade 2 position,
March 19 - June 29 2001: 100% grade 1 position.
Both positions may also be available starting **September 2001.** Please forward a resume along with a brief autobiography, a statement of faith and philosophy of education by January 5, 2001 to:
Calvin Christian School
547 West 5th Street,
Hamilton, ON L9C 3P7
attn: T.Postma
phone: 905-388-2645
fax: 905-388-2769
ccs.edu@sympatico.ca

Job Opportunities

Home Missions Regional Co-Director
Christian Reformed Church in North America

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is seeking applicants for the position of
HOME MISSIONS REGIONAL CO-DIRECTOR
for central and Eastern Canada. Responsibilities include new church development leadership in the region, campus ministry support, and collaboration of ministry with Home Missions Regional Co-Director for established church development. In addition, this position may entail representation on various ministry teams for Home Missions at the CRC offices in Canada and U.S. The regional co-director will have an appropriate educational and professional background, experience in church-related ministries, and management experience in Christian not-for-profit organizations and organizational leadership skills are preferred qualifications. Membership in the Christian Reformed Church is required.

To confidentially apply for this position or receive a position description, please submit by **February 15, 2001** a copy of your resume and a letter stating your interest to:

Director of Personnel
3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8 Canada
Telephone:616-224-5881 / Fax: 616-224-5896
Email: colemann@crcna.org

Westbrook
P. O. Box 99
270 Hunter Road
Grimsby, ON. L3M 4G1
Phone (905) 945-9611
Fax (905) 94575

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Classifieds

Job Opportunities

SHALOM MANOR

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located in Grimsby, requires a full time:

Dietary Services Manager

The successful candidate will:
- be a graduate of an accredited Food and Nutrition Management Program
- be eligible for membership in Ontario Society of Nutrition Management
- have three years relevant experience
- possess excellent interpersonal, creative problem solving, conflict resolution and leadership skills

Dutch language communication skills will be a definite asset.
Please mail resume of qualifications, experience and compensation expectations, in confidence to:

SHALOM MANOR
Attention: Melis Koomans, CEO
12 Bartlett Ave.,Grimsby, ON
L3M 4N5
Fax: 905-945-1211

We thank all applicants but only those considered will be contacted.

Miscellaneous

FOR SALE

ELECTRICAL BUSINESS
Est. 1963

Owing to plans of retirement there is available a family operated electrical business in Fergus, Ontario. We are seeking to pass the business on to an individual that will maintain the good reputation we have established over the past 37 years.

Qualifications of interested licensed party should include dedication to the trade, with commitment to a high standard of work. Good communication skills are an asset in dealing with the public.

For further information contact:

John D. Gansekoele
FERGUS ELECTRIC
RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
Phone: 519-843-3560
Fax: 519-843-1600

For Sale

SJOELBAKKEN: Dutch shuffle-boards, heavy duty, hardwood, 30 puck built-in storage. $150 CDN, $125 US, shipping included, 11 years and quality still comes first!
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519-351-7667

The Living Word
Sermons for reading services.
Contact:
CRC
R. Vander Ploeg, Secr./Treas.
37 Brick Pond Lane
Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1
Phone: (519) 539-2117

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth...
John 1:14a

May the reality of the Incarnation be the source of your celebration this Christmas!

toolman

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St. Catharines, Ont.
L2M 2L3

Tel: 905-935-6875
Fax: 905-935-9176
Cellular: 905-641-5370

Job Opportunities

REDEEMER
University College

Redeemer University College is accepting applications for the following position

Associate Director, Planned Giving

Responsibility will be given for administering the Planned Giving Program and providing professional advice on matters concerning deferred gifts.

Qualifications: Bachelor's degree; Related work experience in planned giving, or in any of the following areas: finance, trust administration, or law; Knowledge of the university college support community is essential. Effective January 16, 2001.

Please direct application materials and inquiries to:
Human Resources Director, Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4.
Tel: 905-648-2131 x4230. FAX: 905-648-2134;
email: jvgeest@redeemer.on.ca.

Christmas Concert Series
by the
Ontario Christian Music Assembly
under the direction of **Leendert Kooij**
with **Andre Knevel** at the organ

Admission: Adults $10.00 - All Concerts
(In Willowdale & Bowmanville - Students $6
Children under 12 - FREE)

December 16	December 19	December 23
WELLAND	BOWMANVILLE	WILLOWDALE
Central United	Maranatha CRC	Willowdale United
905-735-2333	905-623-7196	416-636-9779
7:30 p.m.	8:00p.m.	7:30p.m.

Christmas Praise for the whole family!

The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools invites applications for the position of:

Director of Development:

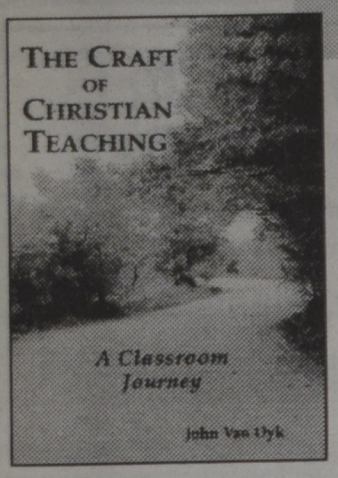
This senior position is responsible for designing and implementing fundraising programs to sustain the development of Christian curriculum in Canada.

Additional responsibilities include promotion advocacy and communications as well as curriculum design.

The successful candidate will have vision for Christian education, a broad range of education experience in Alliance schools and a working knowledge of finances and fundraising.

Inquiries and/or Resumé should be sent to:

Dr. Adrian Guldemond, Executive Director
Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools
617 Garner Rd. E., Ancaster ON L9G 3K9
Fax: 905-648-2110 or email: adriang@oacs.org



new from Dordt Press

The Craft of Christian Teaching

A Classroom Journey by John Van Dyk

In an engaging and readable style, the author explores what it means to teach Christianly. Each of his 18 chapters encourages teachers to both evaluate and enhance their work in the classroom. The book discusses a range of practical issues including meeting individual students' needs, implementing various teaching strategies, and creating community in the classroom. Intended first of all for teachers, this book will also be valuable to administrators, school board members, students preparing to be teachers, parents—anyone interested in Christian education.

paperback, 304 pages, illus., $14.95 US/$22.65 CN
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FROM THE PREFACE

This is a book about teaching—more specifically, about teaching as a distinctively Christian activity. Its purpose is to help teachers see more clearly that accepting Christ not only changes their personal lives, but also their teaching practice.

Van Dyk answers the ultimate question, 'How does one really teach Christianly?' Reading this book is like taking a journey, a stimulating walk into one's own classroom to practice Christian teaching for discipleship. *Lorna Van Gilst, Dordt College*

I wish I had had this book when I started teaching 35 years ago. *Frank De Vries, Nanaimo, BC*

To order or for more information on other publications, please contact:
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bookstore@dordt.edu • www.dordt.edu/onlpub/dordtpress/craft/

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Classifieds

Job Opportunities

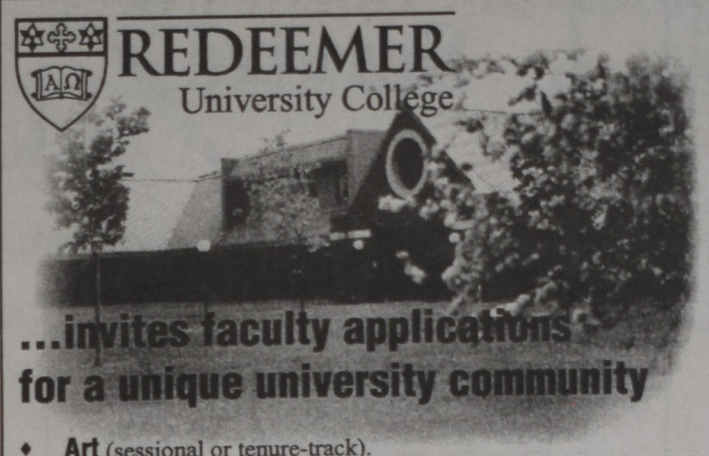
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Christian Reformed World Missions

Christian Reformed World Missions, an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, is beginning a search for an Executive Director. This position is responsible for the administration of the agency, including all of its overseas missions.

The successful candidate shall be capable of providing visionary leadership and have demonstrated experience and training in missiology, theology and organizational management. A working knowledge of and membership in the Christian Reformed Church is required. A detailed position description is available upon request.

Nominations are welcome and, to be fully considered, need to be received by January 31, 2001. Applications are also solicited and, to be fully considered, need to be received no later than February 15, 2001, (please include a resume and letter stating your interest.) All inquiries and applications will be treated as confidential information. Please submit both nominations and applications to:

The Christian Reformed World Mission
Search Committee
c/o 2850 Kalamazoo Ave SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
Telephone: 616-224-0832
Fax: 616-224-5895



- **Art** (sessional or tenure-track).
- **Business** (anticipated tenure-track).
- **Clinical Psychology** (tenure-track).
- **Education** (tenure-track, or sessional leading to tenure-track).

Required:
- Committment to teaching and pursuing scholarship from a reformed Christian perspective
- Doctorate, or equivalent terminal degree
- *Curriculum vitae* with names/addresses of 3 references.

Deadline: January 15, 2001, or until the positions are filled.

Consult the Redeemer website: http://redeemer.on.ca/about/openings.html, for a full description. Application or inquiries should be directed to:
Dr. Wytse van Dijk, Vice-President (Academic)
E-mail: vandijk@redeemer.on.ca
777 Garner Road E., Ancaster, Ontario L9K 1J4 Canada

Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be considered first for these positions. Redeemer University College is an equal opportunity employer.

Classis Chatham Youth Ministry Committee has an opening for a half-time (20 hours/week)
CLASSICAL YOUTH COORDINATOR
to promote and advocate an effective Youth Ministry for and within our Classis. Please forward resumes to, or for a complete job description contact, Ron Hosmar, Chair of the Classis Chatham Classical Youth Ministry Team.
Ron Hosmar,1281 Exmouth St.
Sarnia, Ontario, N7S 1W9
519-337-6485 Office
519-337-3008 Fax
(email)ronscrcy@ebtech.net

Miscellaneous

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Burlington, ON
L7R 3Y8

CALVIN COLLEGE

The Calvin College Education Department is re-opening the search for candidates for a **tenure-track position starting in August 2001**. The position primarily involves teaching reading and reading across the curriculum at the undergraduate and graduate level. It is expected that all full-time faculty assume responsibilities for academic advising, curriculum development, committee service, and research and professional scholarship.

Qualifications include: 1) an earned doctorate (or ABD) in reading; 2) recent K-12 teaching and/or administration experience; 3) a scholarship agenda; and 4) commitment to a Reformed Christian expression of faith.

Calvin College is a Christian college within the Reformed tradition of historic Christianity and is an equal opportunity employer. The College encourages the application of women and minority candidates. Interested applicants should forward a letter stating qualifications and curriculum vitae to:

Dr. L. Stegink
Department Chair, Education Department
Calvin College
3201 Burton Street SE
Grand Rapids MI 49546

Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

MANOAH MANOR

Manoah Manor has an immediate opening for an elderly person requiring: Intermediate Care
Respite Care
Transitional Care

Do you need temporary or permanent placement for an elderly parent or spouse? Are you looking for temporary relief from the ongoing demands of providing care for a loved one? Do you require alternate arrangements for holidays? Please give us a call. We may also be able to help out with temporary Transitional Care, after illness or hospitalization. Each application will be reviewed individually.

Manoah Manor is a 10 bed private Intermediate Care home for the elderly, operated by the Canadian Reformed Senior Citizens Home Society in **Langley B.C.** The home provides an atmosphere of spiritual and cultural unity in a setting where residents receive care as needed, and support from each other, family, staff and fellow church members. Most of our staff speak and/or understand Dutch. Some restrictions may apply.
For further information, please contact Gerda Jacobi at 604-530-9895 as soon as possible.

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Wenst U hulp, contact:
Dutch Retirement Consulting Agency
PO Box 7544
Grand Rapids MI 49510
...of bel één van de volgende nummers:
616-245-9911
616-531-4046/res.

Classifieds

Miscellaneous

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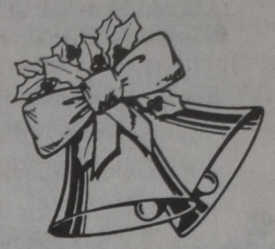

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over the last year.

Reinders Consultants Ltd.
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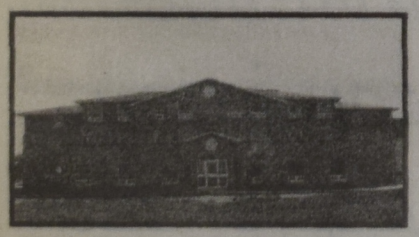
prosperous New Year.



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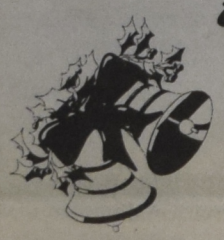
Best Wishes for a Happy and Blessed Christmas



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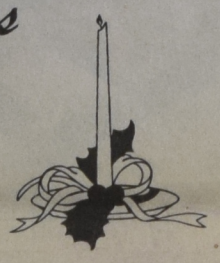

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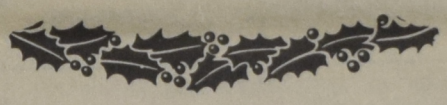

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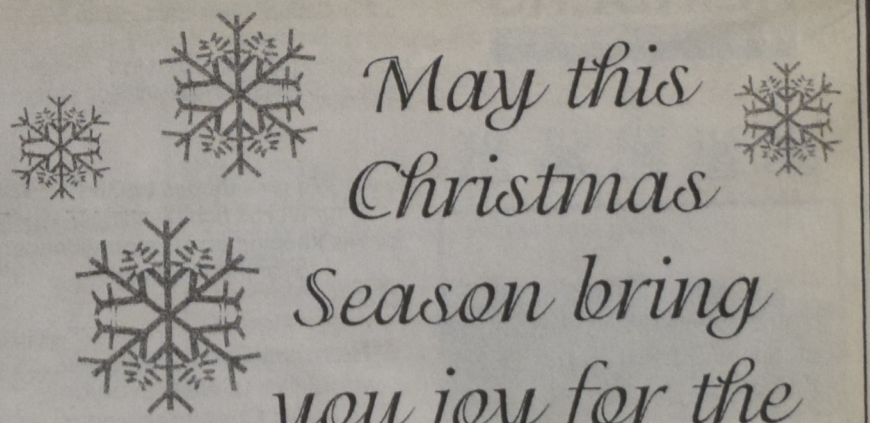

May this Christmas Season bring you joy for the present and hope for the New Year

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Calendar of Events

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Dec. 16	Christmas Concert choirs and band Ontario Chr.Music Assembly, director Leendert Kooij, Andre Knevel, organ, **Welland,** Ont. Central United Church, 7:30 p.m. Tickets $10. Call 905-684-8857
Dec. 17	Dutch Service, Ancaster CRC, 70 Garner Rd. (Hwy. 53) E., **Ancaster,** Ont. 3 p.m., Rev. Koops preaching.
Dec. 19	Christmas Concert choirs and band Ontario Chr.Music Assembly, director Leendert Kooij, Andre Knevel, organ, **Bowmanville,** Ont. Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church 8:00 p.m. (Adults $10, Students $6, children under 12 FREE) Call 905-623-7196
Dec. 23	Christmas Concert choirs and band Ontario Chr.Music Assembly, director Leendert Kooij, Andre Knevel, organ, **Willowdale,** Ont. Willowdale United Church, 7:30 p.m. (Adults $10, Students $6, children under 12 FREE) Call the OCMA 416-636-9779
Mar. 23-25	East CRC of **Strathroy,** Ont. 50th Anniversary Celebration weekend. Dinner Fri. evening; Sat. Open House and Evening Program; Sun. special worship services. Call Rie VanSteeg for dinner reservations or more info 519-245-6785 or e-mail: secretary@eastcrc.org.

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